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APOLOGIA:

FOUR LETTERS

TO

A MINISTER OF AN INDEPENDENT CHURCH,

BY

A MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

——Quid me alta silentia cogis
Rumpere——? VIRG.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love—Rom. xiv. 19. Gal. v. 6.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1761.]

APOLOGIA.

LETTER I.

My dear Friend and Brother,

You have more than once gently called upon me for the reasons which induced me to exercise my ministry as a Clergyman of the Church of England, rather than among the Dissenters, where my first religious connexions were formed, and with many of whom I still maintain a cordial friendship. Hitherto I have usually waved the subject, and contented myself with assuring you, in general terms, that as the preference I gave to the establishment was the result of serious, and, I trust, impartial inquiry; so I had never seen reason to repent of it, no, not for a minute, since the day of my ordination. I now purpose to give you a more particular answer: and as you are not the only person who has expressed a friendly surprise at my choice, I shall communicate my reasons from the press, that all my friends who have been at a loss to account for my conduct, may have such satisfaction as it is in my power to give them. I shall, however, keep *you* particularly in my eye, while I write, that a just sense of the candour and affection with which you have always treated me, may regulate my pen, and preserve me (if possible) from that harsh and angry spirit, into which writers upon controversial points are too often betrayed.

I confess, that, as in this business my conscience is

clear in the sight of Him to whom alone I am properly accountable, I could wish still to continue silent, and submit to be a little misunderstood by some persons whose good opinion I prize, rather than trouble the public with what more immediately relates to myself. But something upon this subject seems expedient in the present day; not so much by way of apology for one or a few individuals, as with a view of obviating prejudices, and preventing, or at least abating, the unhappy effects of a party spirit.

There was a time when the Non-conformists groaned under the iron rod of oppression, and were exposed to fines, penalties, and imprisonment, as well as to cruel mockings, and the lawless rage of a rabble, for worshipping God according to the light of their consciences. Yet I apprehend their non-conformity was rather the occasional and ostensible, than the real cause of the hard treatment they met with. The greater part of the non-conformist ministers of that day were the light and glory of the land. They were men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; penetrated with a deep sense of the Redeemer's glory and love, and of the worth of souls. Their ministrations were accompanied with unction and power, and they were instrumental in turning many sinners from their evil ways. It is no wonder that the world hated such men; that snares were spread for their feet, their liberty abridged, and that many said, "Away with them, they are not worthy to live!" It is probable, that if these servants of the Most High could have enjoyed that freedom for their persons and assemblies, which, in answer to their prayers, is now possessed by those who bear the same name, they would have been well satisfied that the established church should have remained in peaceful

possession of its own order and ritual. And several among them, not the lowest in repute for wisdom and piety, continued long to worship occasionally in the parish churches, after they had been rejected from them as preachers. But things were studiously carried against them with a high hand. The exaction of re-ordination, and the little time allowed for subscribing the book of Common-Prayer, which many of the ministers had not been able to procure when the law called for their assent to it, were two circumstances which greatly contributed to swell the Bartholomew-list. It was well known to some of the leaders in that unhappy business, that there were among the Non-conformists wise and moderate men, who were not disposed to quit their parochial cures, unless they were constrained by the harshest and most violent measures; such, therefore, were the measures they adopted.

It is our mercy to live in more quiet times. We are on all sides freed from restraints in religious concerns; and every person is at liberty to profess, preach, worship, or print, as he thinks proper. But it is still to be lamented, that they who are united upon the same foundations, and agree in the same important leading principles, should lay so much stress upon their circumstantial differences in sentiment, as to prevent the exercise of mutual love and forbearance; and that, instead of labouring in concert, within their respective departments, to promote the common cause, they should be at leisure to vex and worry each other with needless disputation, and uncharitable censure. I hope, amongst us, the High Church principles which formerly produced unjustifiable and oppressive effects, are now generally exploded. But may we not lay a claim in our turn, to that moderation, candour, and tenderness,

from our dissenting brethren, which we cheerfully exercise towards them? But as we (I think) are no longer the aggressors, so they seem no longer content to stand upon the defensive. We wish to join them with heart and hand, in supporting and spreading the great truths of the Gospel; and such as you, my friend, approve our aims, and rejoice with us, if God is pleased to give us success. But there are those among you, whose persons and general conduct we respect, from whom we do not find equal returns of good-will, because we cannot join with them in the support of a palladium which bears the name of the *Dissenting Interest.* I know not whether this phrase was in use a hundred years ago; but were I to meet with it as referring to that period, I should understand by it little more or less than the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom. At present, when I consider the various names, views, and sentiments which obtain among those who form this aggregate, styled the Dissenting Interest, I am at a loss what sense to put upon the term. May I not say, without offence, that it is at least a very heterogeneous body? May I not hope, without presumption, that though you and I are not agreed on the subject of Church Government, yet I am related to you by a much nearer and stronger tie than that which binds you to the Dissenting Interest? I confess, that so far as it is the interest of those who depreciate the person and blood of the Saviour, and deny the agency and influence of the Holy Spirit, or the total depravity of fallen man, so far I cannot (in a religious view) be a friend to it. On the other hand, so far as it regards those who love, avow, and preach the doctrines, experience, and practice, which both you and I include in our idea of the Gospel, so far I can truly say, though not a Dis-

senter myself, the Dissenting Interest is dear to my heart, and has a share in my daily prayers. And in this I am persuaded I speak the sentiments of many, both ministers and laymen, in the establishment. We are sorry, therefore, (at least I am sorry,) though not angry, when books are written, or declarations* (perhaps in the most solemn occasions of worship) unseasonably made, which seem not so much designed to confirm Dissenters in their own principles, as to place those who cannot accede to them in an unfavourable light; the ministers especially, who, according to some representations, must be supposed to be almost destitute of common sense, or else of common honesty.

When I write a letter, especially to a friend, I think myself released from that attention to method which I might observe if I was composing a treatise. As my heart dictates, my pen moves. I therefore hope you will bear with me if I do not come directly to what I proposed; which was to give you some account of the motives of my own conduct. It may not be improper to premise a few preliminary observations. I shall not weary you by attempting to justify every thing that obtains in our way, nor call your attention to all the minutiæ which might furnish subject for debate to those who know not how to employ their time better. It would be mere trifling to dispute for or against a surplice or a band, a gown or a cloak; or to inquire whether it be the size, or the shape, which renders some of these habiliments more or less suitable for a minister than the others. But, perhaps, a few strictures upon establishments and liturgies may not be wholly impertinent to my design.

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* Some of these letters were written in the year 1777.

That national religious establishments, under the New Testament dispensation, are neither of express divine appointment, nor formed in all points upon a Scriptural plan, I readily admit. Whether upon this account they cannot be submitted to without violating the obedience we owe to the Lord Jesus, as head and lawgiver of his church, I shall consider hereafter. At present, permit me only to hope (for my own sake) that such submission is not absolutely sinful; and in that view, to offer a word in favour of their expedience. I plead not for this or that establishment, or the administration of one preferably to another: but chiefly for that circumstance which I suppose is common to them all; I mean, the parcelling out a country, the government of which is professedly Christian, into certain districts, analogous to what we call parishes, and fixing in each of those districts a person with a ministerial character, who by his office is engaged to promote the good of souls within the limits of his own boundary. I think the number of parishes in England and Wales is computed to be not much fewer than ten thousand. The number of dissenting churches and congregations in England and Wales (if those whom I have consulted as the most competent judges are not mistaken) will not be found greatly to exceed one thousand. In how many, or in how few of these, the old puritan Gospel (if I may so call it) is preached or prized, I deem you a better judge than myself. It is certain, that the number of dissenting ministers who are very willing it should be publicly known that they differ widely from the sentiments of their forefathers, is not small. However, we will take them all into the estimate. Now let us for a moment suppose the establishment, with all its provisions, removed and annihi-

lated. In this case some of the dissenting ministers might indeed change their situations, and fix in places where they might hope for more extensive influence; but as none of them could be in two places at once, about nine-tenths of the kingdom would be deprived, at a stroke, of the very form of public religion, and reduced, in a short time, (for any relief the Dissenting Interest could afford,) to a state little better than Heathenism. That there is any regard paid to the Lord's day through the greater part of the land; that the holy Scriptures are publicly read to thousands, who, probably, would otherwise know no more of the Bible than they do of the Koran, are good effects of the national establishment, which, I think, can hardly be denied even by those who are most displeased with it. For this reason, if I could not conform to the establishment myself, I think I should speak respectfully of it, and bless God for it. Some established form of religious profession, with a full and free toleration for all who think they can serve God more acceptably upon a different plan, appears to me the most desirable and promising constitution, for preserving the rights of conscience, and for promoting the welfare of souls. I believe, therefore, that the church of England, as by law established, (for it claims no higher title,) though it be not a perfect institution, and notwithstanding its real or supposed defects, and the faults of individuals within its community, has been, upon the whole, and will be, a blessing to the nation; and that its preservation is an effect of the wise and gracious providence of the Great Head of the Church Universal.

From the expediency of parochial order, I would further deduce the expediency of a rubric and liturgy. For I cannot conceive of an established church, with-

out including in my idea some determinate rule or line respecting doctrine and worship, by which it is discriminated from other churches which are not so established. As to our liturgy, I am far from thinking it incapable of amendment; though, when I consider the temper and spirit of the present times, I dare not wish that the improvement of it should be attempted, lest the intended remedy might prove worse than the disease. As I am not called to defend it, I shall only say, what I believe will be allowed by many candid persons on your side, that the general strain of it is Scriptural, evangelical, and experimental. It recognizes with precision the One Great Object of worship, in his personal distinctions and glorious attributes, the honours and offices of the Redeemer, the power and agency of the Holy Spirit, the evil of sin, the depravity of man, and all the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel. As to the composition. I question if any thing in the English language (our version of the Bible excepted) is worthy of being compared with it for simplicity, perspicuity, energy, and comprehensive fulness of expression. But I suppose the objection does not lie so much against our liturgy in particular, as in general against the use of liturgies of any kind. And, for ought I know, if the compilers of our liturgy could have expected, that all the parishes in the kingdom, and from age to age, would be supplied with ministers competently acquainted with the mysteries of the Gospel, and possessed of the spirit of grace and supplication, they might have left them under less restraint in conducting public worship. I believe many of the Dissenters take it for granted, that a considerable part of our clergy are not only unable to pray in public, to the edification of their hearers, without a form, but are unfit

for the ministerial office in every view. Should this be true, it is a truth which I hope would excite lamentation, rather than ridicule or invective, in all who profess a regard to the glory of God, or love to the souls of men. But, upon this supposition, I should think an evangelical liturgy a great blessing; as it must secure the people (that is, the bulk of the nation) from being exposed to the same uncertainty and disappointment from the reading-desk, as they are liable to from the pulpit. For they who cannot, or do not, preach the Gospel, are not likely to pray agreeably to the spirit of the Gospel, if that part of the public service was likewise left to their own management. Or shall we say, it is an advantage to some dissenting congregations, that their ministers not being confined to a form of sound words, there is little more of Christ or of grace to be found in their prayers than in their sermons? Is it not too hastily taken for granted by many, that God cannot be worshipped in spirit and in truth by those who use a form of prayer? or that he will not afford them who so approach him any testimony of his acceptance? If the words of a form suit and express the desires and feelings of my mind, the prayer is as much *my own* as if I had conceived it upon the spot. On the other hand, if I have the greatest readiness and fluency in diversifying expressions, so that my prayer should always appear unstudied and new; yet if my spirit, or the spirit of those who join with me, be not engaged in it, though I may admire my own performance, and be applauded by others, it is no better than a mere lifeless form in the sight of Him who searcheth the heart. Not to say, that many who profess to pray extempore, that is, without either a printed or a written form, go so much in a beaten path, that they who hear them frequently can tell, with tolerable certainty, how they will begin,

when they are about the middle, and when they are drawing towards the close of their prayer.

It is said, that a prescribed form precludes the exercise of a gift in prayer; which is true: but then, as I hinted before, it in some good measure supplies the want of such a gift; and, blessed be the Lord, there are many living witnesses who can declare, to his praise, that a form does not restrain, much less preclude, the exercise of grace. They know, and are sure, that their Lord and Master owns and comforts them in what their brethren hastily condemn them for. It is well for us, that He seeth not as man seeth, and is no more a respecter of parties than of persons.

It cannot be denied that the Lord himself appointed forms of prayer and praise to be used in the Old Testament church. When the ark set forward, and when it rested, Moses addressed the Lord, not according to the varied emotions of his own spirit, but statedly in the same determinate expressions, Numb. x. 35, 36. So likewise in the solemn benediction which the high priest was to pronounce upon the people, Numb. vi. 23—27. Again, at the presenting of the first-fruits, though the heart of the offerer might be filled with gratitude, he was not to express it in his own way; but the Lord himself prescribed the form of his acknowledgment, confession, and prayer, Deut. xxvi. 12—15. But it may be said, these were enjoined under the Levitical institution, which is now abrogated, and that we live under a dispensation of greater light and liberty. I wish, however, with all our light and liberty, we could more fully come up to the spirit of some of the devotional parts of the Old Testament, which were recorded for our instruction, and most certainly are not abrogated. The book of Psalms especially, contains a rich variety of patterns for prayer, if we may not call them forms,

adapted to all the various exercises of the life of faith. And if, when I read or repeat such Psalms as the sixty-third, eighty-fourth, or eighty-sixth, I could feel, in the manner I wish, the force of every expression, I should think I prayed to good purpose, though I were not to intermingle a single word of my own. So, likewise, with respect to that summary which our Lord condescended to teach his disciples; though, I believe, it had a peculiar reference to the state in which they were before his passion, and while he was still with them; yet, agreeably to the fulness of his wisdom, it is so comprehensive, that I apprehend every part of a believer's intercourse with God in prayer may be reduced, without forcing, to one or the other of the heads of this prayer. And I should esteem it a golden hour indeed, one of the happiest seasons I ever enjoyed in prayer, if I could repeat it with a just impression of the meaning of every clause. But, alas! such are the effects of our unhappy differences, or rather of a wrongness of spirit in maintaining them; and so prone are we to think we cannot be too unlike those whom we are not pleased with, that even the words which our Lord himself has taught us are depreciated and disused by many, I fear, upon no better ground than because they are retained in the usage of the church of England. Though, besides giving us a pattern to pray after that manner, He has, at least, permitted us to use it as a form, directing us, *when we pray*, to say, 'Our Father which art in heaven,' &c. If Scriptural warrant be required, I think we have one more clear and express for the use of this prayer, than can be found for some things upon which no small stress is laid by our dissenting brethren.

Some persons might possibly allege, that if the use

of Scriptural forms of prayer were admitted, it would plead nothing in favour of such forms as are of human composition. But, as I believe the more judicious part of the Dissenters would not make this distinction, a few words may suffice for an answer. Most of us, when we preach, profess to preach *the word of God;* and, I think, we are sufficiently authorized to use the expression, so far as our sermons are explanatory of Scriptural truths, and agreeable to them. For though the system of truth contained in the holy Scriptures has a peculiar authority, as the fountain from whence we are to derive our public discourses, and the standard by which they are to be tried, yet truth, as to its nature, does not admit of degrees; but all propositions, if they be true, must be equally true; and every conclusion which is *rightly* inferred from Scriptural premises, must be, in whatever words it is expressed, (if they are precise and clear,) as true as the premises from which it is drawn. If I give a just definition or explication of a doctrine of the Bible in my own words, the truth or importance of that doctrine are not affected or weakened by the vehicle in which I convey it: nor would a hearer have a right to withhold his attention or assent, from a pretence that, though the proposition itself was true, he was not concerned in it, because I had not expressed it in Scriptural phrases. It is only upon this ground that the propriety and authority of preaching can be maintained; and the like reasoning may be applied to prayer. A prayer is Scriptural, if conformable to the promises, patterns, and truths of Scripture, though it should not contain one phrase taken *totidem verbis* from the Bible.

May I not here appeal to the practice of the Dissenters themselves? I suppose Dr. Watts' Hymns,

and his imitation of David's Psalms, especially the latter, are used by a large majority of dissenting congregations in their public worship. Many of these pieces are devotional; that is, they are in the strain of prayer or praise. They are, therefore, forms of prayer or praise; and when the first line is given out, it is probable that several persons in the assembly know before-hand every word they are to sing. In some congregations the psalm or hymn is delivered line by line; and in most, the bulk of the people are provided with books. Now it appears to me, that when a worshipper, who attends to what is going forward, and is not content with a mere lip service, joins in singing verses, which express the desires and petitions of his heart, to the Lord, he prays; and if he uses verses with which he was before acquainted, he prays by a form; he does the very thing for which we are condemned; unless it can be proved that the fault and evil, which is essential to a form in prose, is entirely removed if the substance of the obnoxious form be expressed in metre and chime.

Crito freely will rehearse
Forms of pray'r and praise in verse;
Why should Crito then suppose,
Forms are sinful when in prose?
Must my form be deem'd a crime
Merely for the want of rhyme?

I have heard of a minister who used to compose hymns in the pulpit. It was his custom to give out one line; and by the time the congregation had sung the first, he had a second ready for them, and so on, as long as he thought proper to sing. These were not forms; they were composed *pro re nata.* Before he had finished a second stanza, the former, (as to the

verse and cadence,) was in a manner forgotten, and the same hymn was never heard twice. I know not what these unpremeditated pieces were in point of composition; but were I persuaded of the unlawfulness of forms of prayer, and at the same time approved of the practice of singing in public worship, I should extremely covet the talent of extempore hymn-making, as one of the most necessary gifts a minister could possess, in order to maintain a consistency in his whole service.

I here close what I intended by way of introduction. In my subsequent letters I purpose to acquaint you more directly with the reasons which determined my own choice, and which still satisfy me, that in receiving episcopal ordination, and exercising my ministry in the established church, I have not acted wrong. At present, I shall relieve your attention, by subscribing myself,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother.

LETTER II.

My Dear Friend and Brother,

As such I address you; as such, notwithstanding our different views of church-government, you acknowledge me. You have confirmed your love to me by many repeated proofs; and it is the desire of my heart, that nothing may take place on either side to weaken the exercise of that friendship which, having the faith and hope of the Gospel for its basis, is calculated to subsist and flourish in a better world. With this thought upon my mind, it is impossible that I should write a single line with an intention of grieving or offending

you; and I am persuaded the same consideration on your part will dispose you to a candid perusal of what I offer. I had rather be silent than plead, even for truth, in an angry, contentious spirit; for every year of my life strengthens my conviction of the importance of that Divine aphorism, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

How far what I have suggested in favour of establishments and liturgies may appear conclusive to you, I know not. I depend much upon your candour; but I make allowances for the unavoidable influence of education, connexion, and habit, both in you and in myself. We generally ascribe the dissent of those who differ from us, in part at least, to prejudices of this kind; but as it is very natural to think favourably of ourselves, we almost take it for granted that *we* have either escaped or outgrown every bias. Though some of the principles we maintain have been instilled into us from our childhood, and we have been confirmed in what we say is *right*, by the instruction, advice, and example of friends, exactly as others have been confirmed in what we call *wrong:* yet that positiveness, which in them is the effect of ignorant prejudice, is in us a very different thing—a just attachment to truth, and the result of impartial examination and full conviction. For my own part, I dare not say that I am free from all bias and prepossession; but I desire and endeavour to guard against their influence.

But though I have ventured to defend the propriety of a national establishment, and, upon that ground, the expediency of a liturgy, I need not tell you that I had no hand in forming either the one or the other. By the allotment of Divine providence, I was born in a nation where these things had taken place long before I came

into the world; therefore, when the Lord gave me a desire to preach his Gospel, and it became necessary to determine under what character I should exercise my ministry, the question before me was not, What form of church-government I might propose as the most Scriptural, if all parties amongst us were willing to refer themselves to my decision? but my inquiry was rather directed to this point, What would be my path of duty, *rebus sic stantibus*, living as I did in the island of Great-Britain, and in that part of it named England? At first, indeed, I saw but little room for deliberation. For about six years after I was awakened to some concern for my soul, my situation in life had secluded me equally from every religious party. During this period, in which I walked alone, the Lord was pleased to show me the way to the throne of grace, and to lead me to study and prize his holy word. By his blessing, I made some advances in knowledge, though slowly, under such discouragements and disadvantages, as they, who, from the beginning of their inquiries, are favoured with public ordinances and the help of Christian conference, can have no proper conception of. At length I became acquainted with some of his people, and had frequent opportunities of hearing the Gospel. My first connexions of this sort were chiefly with Dissenters, and brought me, as it were, into a new world; for, till then, I had hardly an idea of the different names and modes by which professing Christians were distinguished and subdivided, nor of the animosity with which their various disputes were carried on. But, as I received benefit and pleasure from my intercourse with my new friends, it is no wonder that, while my heart was warm, and my experience and judgment unformed, I should enter with

readiness into all their views. Thus, together with the real advantages I obtained among them, I imbibed at the same time a strong prejudice against the established church; and hastily concluded that, though I might occasionally communicate with it as a private person, it would be impossible to officiate in it as a minister, without violating my conscience. Accordingly, my first overtures were to the Dissenters; and, had not the Providence of God remarkably interposed to prevent it, I should probably have been a *brother* with you in every sense. But my designs were over-ruled. A variety of doors by which I sought entrance (for I did not give up upon the first disappointment) were successively shut against me. These repeated delays afforded me more time to think and judge for myself; and the more I considered the point, the more my scruples against conformity gave way. Reasons increased upon me, which not only satisfied me that I might conform without sin, but that the preference (as to my own concern) was plainly on that side. Accordingly, in the Lord's due time, after several years' waiting to know his will, I sought and obtained episcopal ordination: and I seriously assure you, that, though I took this step with a firm persuasion that it was right, I did not at that time see so many reasons to justify my choice, nor perhaps any one reason in so strong a light, as I have since. Far from having regretted this interesting part of my conduct for a single hour, I have been more satisfied with it from year to year. You will please, therefore, to accept what I am about to offer, not merely as on account of the motives which influenced me twenty years ago, but rather as the considerations which, at this minute, call upon me to be heartily thankful to the Lord for leading me by a way

which I knew not, to labour in that part of his vineyard, which experience has proved to be most suitable for maintaining my personal peace and comfort, and (I verily believe likewise) for promoting my usefulness as a minister.

Some of our dissenting brethren, who, I hope, are willing to think as well of the awakened clergy as they can, kindly allow us to be well-meaning people. They believe we desire to be useful, and think it not impossible but that, in some instances, we may be so; but they pity us, either for not having more light, or for not having courage to follow that light which, they suppose, *must* force itself upon us, if we did not wilfully shut it out. From what they hear of us they are staggered. They are loath to deny that the Lord is with us at all; but then, if the Lord be with us indeed, why are we thus? It is almost unaccountable to them, upon this supposition, how we can remain where we are. They are expecting from day to day, that if we are enlightened, as we profess, and honest men, as they wish to find us, we shall surely come out from Babylon, renounce our slavery and will-worship, and openly attach ourselves to the Dissenting Interest. Could we do this, and persuade our people to follow us, they would, probably, no longer doubt whether the Lord had wrought by our ministry or not.

I could wish you not to think of me while you read the paragraph I am now beginning. You know many of our ministers, and you know that there are amongst them men of sound sense, solid judgment, and extensive reading; men whom the Lord has been pleased to favour with an eminency in gifts and spiritual knowledge; in a word, able ministers of the New Testament: men who, though in the sight of the Lord, they

lie low in the dust, conscious of inherent defilement, and that their best services need forgiveness; yet, with regard to their fellow-creatures, can, in the integrity of their hearts, appeal to all around them, that their conversation is not unbecoming the Gospel which they preach. Some of these men, at least, have carefully studied the subject-matter of debate between us and the Dissenters; have read the books, and considered the arguments which are supposed sufficient to convert and reform us; but, after all their endeavours to obtain information, though they agree with the evangelical Dissenters in their views of the Gospel, (which yet they received not from them, but from the holy Scripture,) they are still constrained to differ on the question of church form and order. Now, why should this be imputed to their ignorance and blindness? Does it require a sharper eye to perceive the precise delineation of a Gospel church in the New Testament, if it be really there, than to apprehend and embrace what the Scripture teaches concerning the person and characters of the Redeemer, the way of a sinner's acceptance, or the nature of the life of faith? These things, we are assured by the apostle, the natural man, however qualified, cannot discern. Surely the external form of a Gospel church cannot be equally mysterious with these doctrines; especially as it is professedly seen with the glance of an eye, by some persons who declare themselves enemies to mysteries of any kind. Or why should their not acceding to you be imputed to interested motives? There are with us men whose integrity and ingenuousness are in every other respect unimpeachable; and it is hard that, without sufficient evidence, they should be charged with prevarication in a

business which concerns the honour of their Saviour, and the uprightness of their consciences in his sight. Besides, what can be the powerful motives for such hypocrisy? Do they, by remaining in the establishment, avoid the offence of the cross, and find a shelter from that *opprobrium* and opposition which must be their lot if they had the fortitude to unite with the Dissenters? Here, at least, however, we may be mistaken. I apprehend the Lord has assigned to *us* the post of honour; and that in the treatment we meet with from an unbelieving world, our lot rather resembles that of the Dissenters in the last century than of the present. It is true, we are no more exposed to fines and imprisonment than you are; but if it be an honour to suffer shame for his name's sake, I think *we* have the preeminence. As to money-matters, I could name several of our clergy who are not so plentifully provided for in the establishment, but that if they were to leave us, and go over to your side, it is very probable the manner in which converts of such characters and abilities would be received amongst you, might prove considerably to their emolument. Nor can it upon better grounds be ascribed to obstinate prejudice and incurable bigotry, that your arguments do not prevail. For it is well known that many of our ministers show a cordial and liberal spirit to the Dissenters, receive them gladly into their houses, attend occasionally upon their preaching, recommend and encourage applications for the support of their ministers or places of worship, and are ready to concur with them in every plan for usefulness. And I believe this disposition would be more general, had not experience shown that the candour of some clergymen, in these respects, has been too often improperly

requited, by ungenerous attempts to prejudice and perplex our people, and to weaken our hands.

Yet one or other, or all these charges, must be insinuated against us, rather than fallible men will suppose themselves any thing less than infallible, even in points of a circumstantial nature; and though others, whom they have no reason to think inferior to themselves either in judgment or integrity, are compelled to differ from them:—

> If not so frequent, would not this be strange?
> That 'tis so frequent—this is stranger still!

Be assured, dear sir, that in thus apologizing for my brethren, I write, not only without their desire, but without their knowledge. I think I have now finished all my preambles, and I proceed immediately to acquaint you with my reasons for conforming to the established church, and continuing in it.

My first and principal reason is, THE REGARD I OWE TO THE HONOUR AND AUTHORITY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AS HEAD AND LAWGIVER OF HIS CHURCH. I do not mean that this consideration obliges me absolutely to prefer the form of the Church of England to any other form, but only that it will not permit me to join with those who make dissenting from it necessary in point of conscience.

I cannot suppose that any true Christian, in our land of light and liberty, will hesitate a moment to acknowledge that Christ is the one infallible, authoritative Legislator and Governor of his church; that he is the Lord, and the only Lord of conscience; that nothing inconsistent with his revealed will should be practised, nothing that he has enjoined be omitted, by those who profess allegiance to him. But, however generally ac-

knowledged these principles are, I believe the misconstruction and misapplication of them have contributed more to divide the people of God, and to alienate their affections from each other, than any other cause that can be assigned. It seems reasonable to expect that they whose hopes are built upon the same foundation, who are led by the same Spirit, who are opposed by the same enemies, and interested in the same promises, would look upon each other with mutual complacence, would love as brethren, would bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil their Master's law, and copy his example. But, alas! a mistaken zeal for his honour fills them on all sides with animosity against their fellow-disciples, splits them into a thousand parties, gives rise to fierce and endless contentions, and makes them so earnest for and against their respective peculiarities, that the love, which is the discriminating characteristic of His religion, is scarcely to be found amongst them in such a degree of exercise, as to satisfy even candid observers whether they bear his mark or not.

The visible church of Christ comprises all who call themselves by his name, and who profess to receive his Gospel as a divine revelation. It is a floor on which the grain and the chaff are promiscuously mingled, a field in which the wheat and the tares grow together, a net inclosing a multitude of fishes both good and bad. But the visible church of Christ, taken in this large extent, is not the proper subject of his government, as He is the King of saints. For his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, which none can understand, and his rule a spiritual rule, which none can receive or obey, until born from above, and made new creatures by the power of the Holy Spirit. If these regenerated persons, who it is to be feared are seldom the largest number in any denomina-

tion, be considered as detached from the visible church, the remainder is a mere *caput mortuum*, differenced from the world which lies in wickedness, in nothing but a name, and in the privilege of having the oracles of God committed to it. But nominal Christians, though they have, or may have, in their hands, the Scriptures, which are able to make sinners wise unto salvation, are no less distant and alienated from the life of God, (until he is pleased to reveal his power in their hearts,) than Mahomedans or Heathens. And with respect to these, the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ is but little concerned with the different ways in which they may think proper to constitute themselves into national or particular churches, and please themselves with a lifeless form of worship, while their hearts are in a state of enmity to his grace. Admitting that the plan of a Gospel-church was described with the same precision in the New Testament, as the institutions of the Levitical worship in the Old, and punctually complied with to the minutest circumstance; though the worshippers might applaud and admire their own exactness, and censure and despise all who differed a hair's breadth from them, yet, if they did not serve God in spirit and in truth, their boasted church order would avail them nothing. All that related to the worship of God under the law was confessedly of divine appointment; and the people, in the time of the prophets, were not so much charged with neglecting the prescribed forms, as with resting in them. When this evil became general, and they thought to compensate for their want of spirituality, by their feasts, fasts, and sacrifices, the Lord expresses himself as displeased with his own institutions. Isa. i. 11—15.; lxvi. 3, 4.; Jer. vii. 8—14. 22, 23. They could plead his prescription for their

observances; but in vain they trusted to the temple, and said, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we," when the Lord of the temple was departed from them. And certainly he will be no more pleased with a form without the heart now than he was then.

I must, therefore, confine my inquiry to the church of Christ in a more limited and proper sense; as expressive of his mystical body, composed of all who by faith are united to him as their foundation and root, of all to whom he is the head of vital influence, who have fellowship with him in his death, and are partakers of the power of his resurrection. These are infallibly known only to himself. They are scattered far and wide, separated from each other by seas and mountains; they are a people of many nations and languages. But wherever their lot is cast, they hear his voice, are under his gracious eye, and the life which they live in the flesh is by faith in his name. They have not all equal degrees of light, or measures of grace; nor are they all favoured with equal advantages for knowing or enjoying the full extent of the liberty of the Gospel; but they are all accepted in the Beloved, and approved of God. They are spiritual worshippers, joint partakers of grace, and will hereafter appear together at their Saviour's right hand in glory.

At present they are in an imperfect state. Though created anew in Christ Jesus, they are not freed from a principle of indwelling sin. Their knowledge is clouded by much remaining ignorance; and their zeal, though right in its aim, is often warped and misguided by the corrupt influence of self. For they still have many corruptions, and they live in a world which furnishes frequent occasions of exciting them; and Satan, their

subtle and powerful enemy, is always upon his watch to mislead and ensnare them. They are born, educated, and called, under a great variety of circumstances. Habits of life, local customs, early connexions, and even bodily constitution, have more or less influence in forming their characters, and in giving a tincture and turn to their manner of thinking; so that though, in whatever is essential to their peace and holiness, they are all led by the same spirit, and mind the same things; in others of a secondary nature their sentiments may, and often do, differ as much as the features of their faces. A uniformity of judgment among them is not to be expected, while the wisest are defective in knowledge, the best are defiled with sin, and while the weaknesses of human nature, which are common to them all, are so differently affected by a thousand impressions which arise from their various situations. They might, however, maintain a unity of spirit, and live in the exercise of mutual love, were it not that every party, and almost every individual, unhappily conceives that they are bound in conscience to prescribe their own line of conduct as a standard to which all their brethren ought to conform. They are comparatively but few who consider this requisition to be as unnecessary, unreasonable, and impracticable, as it would be to insist, or expect, that every man's shoes should be exactly of one size.

Thus, though all agree in asserting the authority and right of the Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his church, the various apprehensions they frame of the rule to which he requires them to conform, and their pertinacious attachment to their own expositions of it, separate them almost as much from each other, as if they were not united to him by a principle of living

faith. Their little differences form them into so many separate interests; and the heat with which they defend their own plans, and oppose all who cannot agree with them to a tittle, makes them forget that they are children in the same family, and servants of the same master. And while they vex and worry each other with disputations and censures, the world wonders and laughs at them all. The spirit of love is restrained, offences are multiplied, and Satan is gratified by beholding the extensive effects of his pernicious and long practised maxim, *Divide et impera.*

I am far from supposing that all the various modes of church-government under which spiritual worshippers are cast, are equally agreeable to the spirit and genius of the Gospel, or equally suited to the purposes of edification. Perhaps there is no considerable body of people who profess themselves Christians, however erroneous in their plans of doctrine or worship, among whom the Saviour has not some hidden ones, known to himself, though lost to human observation in the crowd of pretenders which surround them. The power of his grace can break through all disadvantages, and make a few individuals wiser than their teachers, by revealing his truth to their heart, sooner or later, so far as is necessary to salvation. But it must be owned, that some communities which bear the name of Christian, have departed so very far from the simplicity of the Gospel, that if we reason *a priori*, we are ready to conclude it is almost impossible for a converted person to continue a single day in such a communion. But hypothesis cannot be maintained against plain facts. Thus the church of Rome, not merely by adopting an unmeaning burdensome train of ceremonies, but by her doctrines of papal infallibility, invocation of saints and

angels, purgatory, absolution, the mass, and others of the like stamp, is become so exceedingly adulterated, that possibly some persons who may read these letters will form an unfavourable opinon of me, for declaring that I have not the least doubt but the Lord Jesus has had, from age to age, a succession of chosen and faithful witnesses within the pale of that corrupt church. Yet I should hope that they who, having themselves tasted that the Lord is gracious, know the language of a heart under the influence of his Spirit, would, in defiance of Protestant prejudices, be of my mind, if they had opportunity of perusing the writings of some Papists. If such persons as De Fenelon, Paschall, Quenell, and Nicole, (to mention no more,) were not true Christians, where shall we find any who deserve the name? In the writings of these great men, notwithstanding incidental errors, I meet with such strains of experimental godliness, such deep knowledge of the workings of the Spirit of God and of the heart of man, and such masterly explications of many important passages of Scripture, as might do honour to the most enlightened Protestant. And yet these men lived and died in the Popish communion, and to their latest hours, (for any thing that appears to the contrary,) thought they could not separate from it without sin. And, though I have not equal means of information, I can as little doubt that the Lord has a people likewise in the Greek church, which, as to its external frame, seems to be little less unscriptural than the church of Rome itself.

However, I desire to be thankful that I am not a Papist. I am at least one step nearer to the true and acceptable worship of God. For I believe the most rigid of our dissenting brethren will allow, that the

church of England, if *almost*, yet is not *altogether* so depraved and corrupt in its constitution as the church of Rome. I am now in my track, and shall trouble you with fewer digressions in the sequel. My next point will be to examine the different claims of Protestant churches to the honour they all assume, that their respective institutions are most conformable to the rules the apostles have laid down on the subject of church-government, and express the greatest regard to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the undoubted Head and Lawgiver of his church. And to avoid, as much as I can, encumbering what I write in an epistolary way to a friend, with the stiffness of argumentation, I shall content myself with giving you a simple account of what occurred to me upon this head, when I made the inquiry for my own direction. But it is time to conclude this letter by assuring you that I am

Your affectionate Friend.

LETTER III.

My dear Friend and Brother,

If the authority of men truly respectable for learning, judgment, and grace, were sufficient to determine the question, which of the various forms of church-government now obtaining among Christians is most agreeable to the letter and spirit of the New Testament? a modest inquirer, who wishes for the sanction of those whom he esteems wiser and better than himself, would probably, without hesitation, join himself to that party to which he might be first led to apply for direction. For what-

ever difference there may be in the merit of their several claims for pre-eminence, the claim itself is made with an equal degree of confidence by them all. At a time when I was very sensible of my own incompetency to decide this point for myself, I received (as I hope) much benefit from the writings of bishop Hall, Reynolds, Davenant, Mr. Hooker, and other divines of the church of England. I perceived they were persons of strong sense, extensive literature, sound in the faith; and, from such accounts of their lives as I could collect, I judged they had been zealous and diligent in their callings, and burning and shining lights in the world. I could not perceive that any of them were dissatisfied with the established church in which they lived and died; and some of them I found were very strenuous in its defence, not only pleading that it was lawful to maintain communion with it, but offering many arguments to prove that it was even sinful to separate from it; and that it was the only resemblance of the primitive apostolical church. I own to you that I thought some of their assertions upon this head were too strong, and some of their arguments not fully conclusive. Yet I was a little staggered, and it gave me pain to be forced to differ in any point from men whom I believed to have been full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. However, some general idea I possessed of the liberty of the Gospel, a conviction that the Lord had a people and a work in other countries, where the form of the church of England could not take place, and the previous attachment I had to the Dissenters, with whom, as I have said, I was first acquainted, prevented me from becoming what is called a High Churchman. But as, for these reasons, I could not give the church of England an exclusive preference, or think myself

authorized to brand those who dissented from it with the hard names of schismatics and fanatics; so, on the other hand, I could not go into the opposite extreme, or suppose that a church in which the Lord employed and owned such valuable men, and had a numerous spiritual people, was no better than a Babylon, from whence all who loved his name and salvation, were in duty and conscience bound to withdraw.

Many books, likewise, came in my way, written by divines of the church of Scotland. In the writings of Durham, Fleming, Halyburton, and others, I found proofs that they were not inferior in light, holiness, and a sound spiritual judgment, to the most eminent luminaries of our own church. In what concerned the life and power of religion, I could perceive no considerable difference between them. As they were all taught by the same Spirit, so they were all teachers of the same truths. But in their sentiments upon church-government they differed very widely. Wherein they agreed I could fully agree with them; wherein they differed, I was left to the uncertainty of a traveller, who, inquiring his way of two persons, is told by one to turn to the right, and by the other, directly opposite, to the left. My English guides would persuade me that the form of the church from the apostles' days was episcopal; my Scotch guides were rather more positive that our prelacy was, almost equally with the papacy, a branch and a mark of antichrist. If I compared the sufficiency of each to decide for me, I knew not which to prefer. On both sides were men of wisdom and grace, and who I believed would not wilfully mislead me; on both sides they confessed themselves in general to be, like myself, fallible, and liable to mistake. Only in this one point both sides appeared confident that they could

not be mistaken; and yet their opinions were not only diverse, but contradictory.

The suspense in which I was held by these incompatible claimants, sent me more readily and attentively to renew my inquiries amongst my former friends of your denomination. By these I was instructed, that I need not trouble myself with weighing and comparing the arguments which the English and Scotch churches had to offer in favour of their respective constitutions, for they were both equally destitute of any foundation in truth or Scripture: that I had only to read the New Testament for myself, and it must appear very plain, that the Lord Christ had not left a concern of this importance undetermined; but had directed his apostles to leave in their writings a pattern, according to which it was his pleasure all his churches in future ages should be formed: that the first churches were Congregational or Independent; and that every other plan was unscriptural, and a presumptuous deviation from the declared will of the Lord. As I had been a debtor to some of their writers likewise, and was personally acquainted with several of their ministers, their representations had so much weight with me as to increase my embarrassment.

My difficulties grew upon me, when I found, by consulting different Independent writers, who had professedly treated this subject, that though they were of one mind in asserting that a plain and satisfactory pattern for this Congregational order, might be easily collected and stated from a perusal of the New Testament; yet, when they came to delineate and describe it according to their own idea, they were far from being agreed among themselves, as to the nature and number of the officers, powers, and acts, which are requisite

to the constitution and administration of a regularly organized Gospel church. I formerly employed much time and attention in this disquisition; but not having for many years past reviewed a controversy which I think rather dry and uninteresting, I cannot from memory enter into a detail of particulars; nor is it needful. Of the fact I think I may be confident, that there is not such an agreement among them as might be expected, if the plan from which they all profess to copy was clearly and expressly revealed in the New Testament, as obligatory upon all Christians. Here I was at a loss again; for if I could have admitted their principle, that every circumstance of worship and government in a church ought to have the warrant of a precept or a precedent from the Scripture, still I needed help to digest and put together the several regulations which were dispersed in so many different parts of the Gospels and Epistles; for I found myself unable to frame the detached materials into one orderly structure by my own skill. But when they who professed to have the light which I wanted, were themselves divided upon the point, I was precluded from the hope of any certain assistance; for as to probabilities and conjectures, I might as well depend upon my own, as upon those of another.

Nor was this the whole of my difficulty. I was honestly advised to read and examine for myself. I did so; and it appeared to me, by comparing what I read with what I saw, that the Independents could not, at least did not, keep closely to their own principles. I thought I met with usages in the churches planted by the apostles, which did not obtain in any of the congregational churches I was acquainted with. And, on the other hand, I noticed some usages among these, of

which I could find no traces in the inspired account we have of the primitive churches. Permit me, by way of specimen, to mention one instance in each kind. If it was necessary, I could mention several; but I wish not to be tedious.

The apostle Paul addresses the Corinthians as a church of Christ; and we have from him a larger and more particular account of the practices of their church, than of any other. In chap. xiv. of his First Epistle, after censuring and correcting some improprieties which had obtained in their public assemblies, he gives them this direction: "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted." The general practice of congregational churches in our time, seems not to comply with this apostolic injunction. I think, my friend, in your assemblies, especially in your solemn stated worship on the Lord's day, there is seldom more than one speaker. The same minister, who preaches, usually begins and ends the service. Should it be pleaded, that the apostle speaks of prophesying, and evidently supposes that the church of Corinth was favoured with extraordinary gifts and revelations which are now ceased, and that therefore the rule cannot in that respect extend to us; I have two answers to make.

In the first place, though we do not expect extraordinary revelations, we have encouragement to hope for the presence of our Saviour, and the gracious influences of his Spirit, when we meet in his name, sufficient to enable us to speak to his praise, and to the edification and comfort of our brethren, if not in foreign tongues, at least in our own; and it is probable that you have

more than once been a hearer in a public assembly, when your heart has been so warmed and impressed with the truths of the Gospel, that you would not have been unwilling to have ascended the pulpit yourself, either to confirm or correct what you have been hearing, or to indulge the liberty you found in your mind upon some other important subject. Perhaps something was *then revealed to you*, which might have been very suitable to the occasion, and to the state of the congregation. Why did you not then declare it? Why did you neglect to stir up the gift of God that was in you? Would it have been contrary to the custom of your churches? But would you not, upon your principles, have been justified by the custom of a New Testament church, and the injunction of an apostle?

But, secondly, and chiefly, I answer, if it be admitted that, because the primitive churches had extraordinary gifts, there are some things in their practice which are not proper for our* imitation, who have not the same gifts: then I quite give up the hope of being able to determine the exact and invariable form of a church, by such lights as the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles afford me; unless some man or set of men be qualified and commissioned to draw the line for me, and to show me distinctly how far, and in what instances, the state of the first Christians is limited from being a pattern to us, by the extraordinary dispensations of that age; and how far, and in what cases, their pattern is binding upon us still, notwithstanding those dispensations have long since ceased. To be directed to study these churches as a model, and to be told at the same time, that some parts of their practice

* See Neal's History of the Puritans, v. i. p. 379. 2d. edit. 1732.

were not designed for the imitation of future ages, without distinctly specifying which were and which were not, is rather the way to perplex and bewilder an inquirer, than to help him to information. Upon this ground, though I might refuse to trust the assumed infallibility of the Pope, I must feel the need of an infallible visible guide to reside somewhere in the church; for without such assistance I could not take a single step with certainty, but must be liable to stumble at the very threshold of my inquiry.

I think it is the usual practice in your churches, to require from all persons who wish to be admitted into your communion, an account, either verbal or written, of what is called their experience; in which, not only a declaration of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and their purpose by grace, to devote themselves to him, is expected, but likewise a recital of the steps by which they were led to a knowledge and profession of the Gospel. I select this as one instance in which, I conceive, you have neither precept nor precedent in the Scripture for your warrant. A profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of acceptance of him, and submission to him in his offices and characters, supported by the evidence of a Gospel conversation, should, I apprehend, be deemed sufficient to entitle a person to church-membership; and especially by those who so loudly insist upon the evil of superadding any regulations to those which are already provided by our Lord and his apostles. The authority which makes it a pre-requisite for admission, that a person shall relate how and when he was awakened, what exercises of mind he has passed through, and other particulars of a like nature, appears to me to be as merely human as the authority which prescribes the canons of an established church. If the practice be

defensible, it must be on the plea of expediency. It is not my present business to inquire how far it may be expedient for young converts, for young persons, especially for young women, to be compelled to speak before a public assembly; or if that be dispensed with, for the sake of other interfering expediencies, how far it is expedient to trust to a written experience; otherwise I could say a good deal upon this head. But it is sufficient for my purpose, if no shadow of this practice can be found in the New Testament. On the contrary, I read, that when Saul, after he escaped from Damascus, essayed to join himself to the disciples, it was Barnabas, and not* Saul himself, who informed them both of his conversion, and of the extraordinary manner in which it was effected, subjoining a testimony of his conduct from the time he had professed a change. But if expediency may warrant a measure in your churches not expressly commanded, why not likewise in ours? Be it either right or wrong in one case, it must be so in both; and therefore my remark on this particular, will, at least, have the force of *argumentum ad hominem.*

I am afraid I shall weary you, by only giving a brief account of the long and intricate road which I travelled, to discover, if I could, the best constituted church. But I must intreat your patience a little longer, till I bring you to the end of my journey. It may be necessary to inform some of my readers, though not you, that a considerable part of the congregational churches differ from the rest, with respect to the mode and subjects of baptism. At the time when my thoughts were most engaged about church-order, I lived in intimate habits of friendship with several Baptists, who were

* See Dr. Guise on Acts, ix. 27.

very willing to assist me in settling my judgment. These, though they would have been pleased to see me yield to the arguments of their Pædo-baptist brethren, would not be satisfied that I should stop where they stopped. They urged Scripture precepts and precedents to lead me further; and said, that none of the congregational churches but their own were agreeable to the mind of Christ. They told me, that though I should acknowledge and embrace the congregational order, which, undoubtedly, was the only one countenanced by Scripture, still I could not be right till I had renounced what I called the baptism I had received in my infancy, and submitted (as they termed it) to baptism by immersion, to which I was bound, not only by the practice of the primitive church, but by the example of our Lord himself, who, when he was baptized, said, for our instruction, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

I own, Sir, that if I had seen it my duty to accede to the church-order of the Independents, I know not but their principles would have led me from them again, to join with the Baptists. How they, who maintaining infant baptism, press Scripture precedent so strongly upon me, answer the Baptists, who in this point press it as strongly upon themselves, is not my concern. I did not stand upon the same ground, and therefore the arguments of the Baptists did not much affect me. I thought the example of our Lord pleaded as much for circumcision as for baptism. I questioned whether I, a poor sinner, had any call to imitate him in those things which it became him as our surety to perform, in order "to fulfil all righteousness." It appeared to me, that John's baptism, and the Christian baptism were different; and though the Baptists assured me that they

were the same, I was not convinced. I thought they were plainly distinguished in Acts, xix. 2—5. and I was grieved by the attempts of some wise and good men to wrest a sense from that passage, so contrary to its plain and obvious meaning, merely to support a favourite scheme. And as the form of Christian baptism is laid down in express words, Matth. xxviii. 19, I must continue to think it different from the baptism of John, till I can have sufficient proof that John baptized our Saviour in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

I found, likewise, that the Baptists, though unanimous against us, and even against those who in every point but one agree with them, were divided among themselves. Some of them, while they practise what they think a duty, do not so peremptorily prescribe it to others, as to make it an indispensable term of communion; but they will receive a person as a church-member, whom they judge to be sound in the faith, and of a good conversation, though they consider him, in strictness of speech, as unbaptized. But others are much hurt by this concession, and bear testimony against it as unscriptural and wrong. Their views are so strict, that if they certainly knew that a person who wished to communicate with them was the most eminent Christian in the land, unless he was likewise baptized in their manner, they could not, they durst not, admit him to the Lord's table, to eat of that bread, and to drink of that cup, which is, by his command and appointment, the privilege and portion of all believers. This difference of judgment between them has been thought so important, that the reasons for and against, and their mutual censures of each other, have been laid before the public, by good men on each side of the question.

Now, my dear friend, upon this state of the case, what could I do? I had reviewed and compared the sentiments of a number of respectable writers and ministers of different names. In essentials, I agreed with them all; and in circumstantials, I differed no more from any of them than they differed among themselves. They all confessed they were fallible, yet they all decided with an air of infallibility; for they all, in their turns, expected me to unite with them, if I had any regard to the authority and honour of the Lord Jesus as head of the church: but the very consideration they proposed restrained me from uniting with any of them. For I cannot think that I should honour the headship and kingly office of Christ, by acknowledging him as the head of a party and subdivision of his people, to the exclusion of the rest. Every party uses fair-sounding words of liberty; but when an explanation is made, it amounts to little more than this—that they will give me liberty to think as they think, and to act as they act; which to me, who claim the same right of thinking for myself, and of acting according to the dictates of my own conscience, is no liberty at all. I therefore came to such conclusions as these—that I would love them all—that I would hold a friendly intercourse with them all, so far as they should providentially come in my way; but that I would stand fast in the liberty with which Christ had made me free, and call none of them master—in fine, that if others sought to honour him, by laying a great stress on matters of doubtful disputation, my way of honouring him should be by endeavouring to show that his kingdom is not of this world, nor consists in meats and drinks, in pleading for forms and parties; but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and that neither circumcision is any

thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, and the faith which worketh by love. There was a time when I could have joined with the Dissenters, if the providence of God had opened my way to them; but further experience and observation have so far altered my judgment, that had I my choice to make again, it seems to me, that I could no more officiate as a minister among any people who insist upon other terms of communion than those which our Lord has appointed, faith and holiness, than I could subscribe to the dogmas of the council of Trent. My regard to his honour will not allow me to exclude any whom I believe he has been pleased to receive. Thus much for the first reason of my conformity. Yet, in justice to the Non-conformists, I must add, that if I wished to avail myself of the sanction of great names, I could mention some among them, who, if they were now living, I am persuaded would not blame me for conforming, though they could not, in conscience, do it themselves. Particularly I judge thus (from many of his writings) of the truly great Mr. Howe, whose praise is in all the churches.

I am sincerely yours—

LETTER IV.

My Dear Friend and Brother,

I have given you the chief reason why I am not a Dissenter; and it appears to me a sufficient one, though I could assign no other. I have, however, two or three more to offer you; but I hope to comprise them all within the compass of this letter; for, indeed, I begin to be weary of a subject which is not quite suit-

able to my taste and inclination. But it seems not unseasonable, and, I hope, may not be unuseful, to show you that the preference I have given to the church of England is not the effect either of inconsideration or prejudice.

My second reason for not being a Dissenter is, BECAUSE I HIGHLY VALUE THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT, AND MY LIBERTY AS A MAN AND AS A CHRISTIAN. Here again I think we are agreed in principle. You rejoice in the name of a Protestant Dissenter, as setting you free from the shackles and impositions of men; and probably think of me and my brethren in the establishment with a degree of friendly pity; taking it for granted that the engagements we are under hold us in a painful state of subjection and bondage, from which you charitably wish to see us released.

We are obliged to persons of your candid disposition for your sympathy and good wishes; and we repay you in kind. As we cannot think exactly alike, this seems the best method we can take. Harsh censures and angry disputations would be unbecoming our profession, and hurtful to our spirits; but it can do us no harm to pity and pray for each other. Perhaps you are ready to say, "You would surely pity me if you knew all my inward and outward trials; but you need not pity me for being a Dissenter, because I account it my great privilege." I may say the same, with the alteration of one word. If you knew the evils which I feel within, and the snares and difficulties which beset me from without, you would pity me indeed. But that I exercise my ministry in the church of England appears to me, as things stand, to be rather a subject for congratulation than compassion. I cannot become a Dis-

senter till I am weary of my liberty. If you please, we will compare notes upon this head.

Let me first speak of the restraints we are under. I am bound, by my subscription, to the forms and rubric of the Common Prayer; but my subscription was really *ex animo*. I approve the service, and therefore it is no burden to me to use it. I do not consider it as faultless, nor can I subscribe to any book of human composition in the same absolute manner as I would to the Bible. But by assenting to our church ritual, I give up less of my own private judgment, for the sake of peace, than I should by espousing the rules and practices of any dissenting churches I am acquainted with. Again, having accepted a designation to the cure of souls, my public ministry is thereby confined to parish churches; and I cannot, consistently with what I conceive to be the import of my voluntary engagements, preach at random, and in all places, without reserve. But this is no restraint upon my conscience. While I have the examples of our Lord and his apostles in my view, I cannot doubt the lawfulness of preaching on mountains or plains, in market-places, or on the sea-shore. But things in themselves lawful are not always, or to all persons, expedient. I approve of parochial order. I interfere not with the conduct of others; but believe it is, upon the whole, best for me to confine myself to the duties of my own charge, and to such opportunities of preaching in parochial pulpits as may occasionally offer. Between the one and the other I have sufficient employment. And though the bishop who ordained me, laid me under no restrictions, I would not have applied to him for ordination, if I had not been previously determined to submit to his autho-

rity, and to the rules of the church. I thought, and still think it my duty to preserve a consistency of character; for I was not ordained to be an apostle or evangelist, to spread the Gospel throughout a kingdom; but to take care of the particular flock committed to my charge. But I need not enlarge upon this point, as I think the Dissenters do not in general, by their practice, countenance what we call irregularity, but are almost as seldom seen preaching in the fields or by the way-sides as the most regular of our clergy; though they cannot plead our reasons for not doing it, and are certainly not restrained either by the precepts or precedents of the New Testament.

Nor am I under any disagreeable constraint from my superiors in the church. The archdeacon in his district, and the bishop in his diocese, hold their respective visitations; the former annually, the latter once in three years. At these visitations, the clergy (especially in the country) are expected to attend. On these occasions we answer to our names, hear a sermon, or a charge, and usually dine together. There is nothing painful to me in paying these tokens of respect to my acknowledged superiors, and receiving marks of civility from them. At all other times, while we keep within the limits which I have already told you I subscribed and consented to *ex animo*, we scarcely know, at least we do not feel, that we have any superiors. So far as I am concerned, I have reason to acknowledge that the administration of our church-government is gentle and liberal. I have, from the first, preached my sentiments with the greatest freedom. I always acted in the parishes which I have served according to my own judgment; and I have done some things which have not the sanction of general custom; but I never

met with the smallest check, interference, or mark of displeasure from any of my superiors in the church, to this hour. Such are my restraints, and such is my liberty. I am bound by no regulations but what I myself approve; and within these boundaries I do as I please, no man forbidding or controlling me.

Indeed, I have often thought that I have as good a right to the name of Independent as yourself. Neither you nor I would assume it to the prejudice of our dependence upon our Lord and Saviour; and with respect to the influence of men, perhaps, we have the advantage of you. I think we are more independent of our brethren, and more independent of our people.

Though, according to your plan, every particular church is called Independent, as possessing and exercising every kind of church power within itself, and not subject to the control of any other Christian society; yet, considering you as a body, or (according to the modern phrase) an *Interest*, there is a kind of union and association among your ministers, which has a greater effect than some people are aware of, and which, I apprehend, may in some instances be rather unfriendly to the liberty you so highly prize. Some of your ministers, from their situation or connexion, have more influence than others. They have opportunities of assisting poorer ministers; and are, I suppose, in many cases, the judges whether they shall be assisted or not, and how far. They who best know human nature, are best qualified to judge how far the professed independence of your churches may be abated by this influence of connexion; and whether the weight of a *board* of ministers may not be occasionally felt by those who pity us for being subordinate to a *bench* of bishops. I own I have, upon some occasions, been led to compare your mi-

nisters to a company of soldiers in their exercise; where every one must move in a prescribed line, keep the same pace, and make the like motions with the rest, on pain of being treated as refractory. Ministers in the establishment know nothing of these restraints. We are connected in love, but not upon system. We profess the same leading principles and aims, but each one acts singly and individually for himself.

I think we are likewise more independent of our people. The constitution of your churches, which you suppose the only one agreeable to the Scripture, appears to me faulty, in giving a greater power to the people than the Scripture authorizes. There is, doubtless, a sense in which ministers are not only the servants of the Lord, but, for his sake, the servants of the churches; but it is a service which implies rule, and is entitled to respect. Thus the apostle says, "Obey them that have the rule over you." Their office is that of a steward, who is neither to lord it over the household, nor to be entirely under subjection to it, but to superintend and provide for the family. Scriptural regulations are wisely and graciously adapted to our state of infirmity; but I think the power which the people with you claim, and attempt to exercise, is not so. Many of them, though truly gracious persons, may, notwithstanding, from their situation in life, their want of education, and the narrowness of their views, be very incapable of government; yet, when a number of such are associated according to your plan, under the honourable title of a church of Christ, they acquire a great importance. Almost every individual conceives himself qualified to judge and to guide the minister; to sift and scrutinize his expressions, and to tell him how and what he ought to preach. But the

poorer part of your flocks are not always the most troublesome. The rich can contribute most to the minister's support, who is often entirely dependant upon his people for a maintenance; their riches likewise give them some additional weight and influence in the church; and the officers whom you call the deacons are usually chosen from among the more wealthy. But it is not always found that the most wealthy church-members are the most eminent either for grace or wisdom. We may be rather sure, that riches, if the possessors are not proportionably humble and spiritual, have a direct tendency to nourish the worms of self-conceit, and self-will. Such persons expect to be consulted, and that their judgment shall be followed. The preaching must be suited to their taste and sentiment: and if any thing is either enforced or censured which bears hard upon their conduct, they think themselves ill-treated. Although a faithful minister, in his better hours, disdains the thought of complying with the caprice of his hearers, or conniving at their faults; yet human nature is weak, and it must be allowed, that in such circumstances he stands in a state of temptation. And if he has grace to maintain his integrity; yet it is painful and difficult to be obliged frequently to displease those on whom we depend, and who, in some other respects, may be our best friends and benefactors. I can truly say, that my heart has been grieved for the opposition, neglect, and unkindness, which some valuable men among you have, to my knowledge, met with, from those who ought to have esteemed them very highly for their work's sake. The effects of this supreme power lodged in the people, and of the unsanctified spirit in which it has been exercised, have been often visible in the divisions and subdivisions which have crumbled large societies into separate hand-

fuls, if I may so speak. And to this, I am afraid, rather than to the spread of a work of grace, may be ascribed, in many instances, the great increase of the number of your churches of late years. Now, in the establishment we know but little of these difficulties; we are not so much at the mercy of our hearers for our subsistence; and though we probably preach to some who are wiser and better, as well as richer, than ourselves, we have no hearers who assume a right to direct us, or whom we should stand in fear of if they did. For my own part, I wish to have a spirit willing to profit by a hint even from a child, and to pay attention to the advice of any person who speaks to me in love, and in a right temper. But humble, loving Christians are more disposed to find fault with themselves, than with their minister, and to receive instruction than to offer it. But should a conformist to the world, or a zealot for a party, expect me to accommodate my preaching to his practice, or to his Shibboleth, I could give him an answer without being afraid of consequences.

I may add, that I apprehend we have more liberty with respect to our pulpits. At least I remember to have heard sermons from some of your pulpits, the strain of which has been so very different from the professed sentiments of the proper pastor of the church, that I have thought to myself, How came this minister to preach in this place? Upon inquiry I found at one time, that the gentleman belonged to the *connexion;* at another, that he was asked to preach at the desire of a principal person in the church or congregation, who, it seems, approved him, though, I was persuaded, the pastor did not.

I esteem it likewise a branch of my Christian liberty,

that I can hear whom I please, and form what acquaintance I please, among the various denominations of Christians, without being called to account for it. I hope the Dissenters are likewise growing more into this liberty. However, as I know some among your people who would willingly hear us occasionally, were they not afraid of their ministers, so I know some of your ministers who would be willing to hear us, but do not, because they are afraid of their people.

Thus much (though more might be said) by way of comparing our advantages in point of liberty. I am well pleased with my lot; if you are equally pleased with yours, I am glad of it. I write only on the defensive; I neither expect nor wish to alter your views. Enjoy your liberty; only allow me to enjoy, and be thankful for mine.

I have now acquainted you with my two principal reasons for not being a Dissenter. The first concerned my conscience. For, though my regard to the authority of the great Lord and Lawgiver of the church, did not directly oblige me to unite with the establishment, it discouraged me from uniting with any of the parties who pretended an exclusive right from Him to enforce their own particular church forms. When conscience did not interfere, my second reason, though rather of a prudential kind, was of considerable weight with me. I loved liberty, and therefore gave a preference to the church of England, believing I might, in that situation, exercise my ministry with the most freedom. I have made the experiment, and have no reason to repent of it. These points being cleared, my way was open to attend to another consideration, which had a further influence in determining my mind. This I am about to offer to you as a third reason for my being where I am—The PRO-

BABILITY OF GREATER USEFULNESS. This probability, as to myself and to others who can conform with a good conscience, seemed to lie on the side of the establishment, upon several accounts.

1. Great multitudes in this Christian nation (so called) are grossly ignorant of the first principles of religion, inattentive to the worth and welfare of their souls, and lamentably destitute of the proper means of instruction. I hoped for opportunities in the establishment of preaching to many who could not hear the Dissenters. The children of God, known to himself, are scattered abroad far and wide; and as faith more usually comes by hearing, I admire His condescension and goodness in permitting his ministers to think differently on some external points, that they may, with an upright heart, serve him in the different departments of his vineyard. They who are Dissenters upon principle, would act against their judgments and consciences, were they to conform for the sake of usefulness. I am well content that they should remain as they are; but it has been proved a mercy to thousands, that all who are called and qualified to preach the Gospel, are not like-minded in this respect.

2. The spirit of bigotry and prejudice is too prevalent on all sides. As there are Dissenters who would think it sinful to be seen within the walls of a church; so there are other persons who place a principal part of their religion in an ignorant attachment to our forms, and could not easily be prevailed upon to enter within the doors of a meeting-house. But their prepossession in favour of our churches, gives the minister who can conscientiously meet them there a great advantage *ad hominem*, by confirming the truths of the Gospel (which, when first declared, are generally disliked and opposed)

from the tenour of our Liturgy and Articles, to which they profess some regard. A large part of our auditories, especially in places where the Gospel is considered as a novelty, consists of persons of this description. But the Lord has been pleased, in very many instances, to honour our service amongst them with his blessing. By the power of his Spirit, the truth is made manifest to their hearts; they are turned from darkness to light, and from the bondage of sin to serve the living God. Then their former prejudices subside; insomuch that many, who once despised and hated the Dissenters, have been afterwards persuaded to join with them. The Dissenting Interest would probably have been much weaker than it is at present, if it had not been strengthened by the accession of many church-members, and more than a few of your teachers and pastors, who had no inclination to hear your ministers, until they were first awakened under ours. The words of our Lord may in this sense be applied to many of your churches, "Other men laboured, and ye have entered into the fruits of their labours." The aim of my ministry, I trust, is not to promote the interests of a party, but to win souls for Christ. We have, however, the comfort to find, that a number are not only called, but edified and established, by the blessing of God on our preaching; and that many of the most judicious and spiritual of our people, are proof against the insinuations which prevail on some to forsake the church of England, in hopes of enjoying a purer and more acceptable worship among the Dissenters. As to those who do leave us, if they are truly benefitted, if they really grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord, in humility, meekness, benevolence, and deadness to the world, more among you than they would

have done amongst us, I can sincerely rejoice. But I think your brethren have no just reason to be either displeased or sorry, that God has raised up ministers to preach to thousands to whom they would never have had access.

3. I saw, likewise, that the Lord had been pleased, of late years, to return, by the power of his Spirit, to the church of England; which, I believe many Dissenters thought he had so utterly forsaken, that he would return no more. This leads me to a tender point; and I wish to touch upon it with great tenderness. We have none of us any thing to boast of. Our warmest exertions in the service of such a Master are far too cold; and our greatest success falls very short of what we ought to pray for. We preach no other Gospel than you do; we love and respect many of your ministers for their knowledge, piety, and exemplary conversation. But I believe you will allow that the general state of your churches at present, is not so lively and flourishing as it was in the days of the old Non-conformists. I believe the best of your people were long ago sensible of a decline; that they sincerely lamented it, and earnestly prayed for a revival. Their prayers were at length answered, but not in the way they expected. A great and spreading revival of religion took place, but the instruments were not Dissenters. At the time when I was ordained, there was a considerable number of regular parochial ministers who preached the doctrines of the Reformation. The number has been greatly increased since, and is still increasing. I could not but judge, that the Lord's presence with his word in awakening sinners, and in applying it with power to the heart, was more evident and striking on this side than on yours. Not because we are better than you;

but because the work with us is rather new, whereas amongst you it is of an older date. The history of the church of God, and of human nature in past ages, teaches us to expect that revivals of religion will seldom stand long at their primitive height, but will gradually subside and degenerate, till things return in a course of time nearly to their former state; though a name, perhaps first imposed as a stigma by the world, and a form, which owed all its value to the Spirit that once enlivened it, may still remain. I wish I could affirm, that none who were otherwise competent judges of a revival, have been prevented by their prepossessions from rejoicing in what God has wrought amongst us. But I fear it has been otherwise, and that a spirit of prejudice and party discovered itself upon the occasion, which proved hurtful to some good men. When I think of the abilities and characters of some dissenting ministers, I cannot but ascribe the little visible success they meet with, in some measure, to their unwillingness to acknowledge a work of God in which they themselves were not employed. Their exceptions were not wholly groundless. A lively zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls, in persons whose judgments were not fully ripened by observation and experience, did not secure them from incidental mistakes and blemishes. These were easily seen, and eagerly noticed. A desire of being free from the least suspicion of giving countenance to the unguarded, though well-meant sallies of active spirits, seems to have led some of your ministers into a contrary extreme; and their public discourses, though solid and judicious compositions, lost that animation in delivery, which is, in some degree, necessary to engage attention, and to keep up an auditory. Thus, while

preachers much inferior to them, for learning and general knowledge in divinity, have had crowded assemblies, the pleasure with which I have heard some of your most eminent ministers has been often abated, by observing that the number of hearers has been much smaller than the number of pews in the place. I must therefore confess, that one consideration which deterred me from joining the Dissenters, was, a fear, lest the love of peace, and a temper rather compliant, might insensibly betray me into an over-cautious spirit, damp my zeal, or divert it into a wrong channel, and thereby prevent the success at which I aimed. I rather chose to unite with those people whom I thought the most likely to maintain and encourage what little fervour I possessed; and where I saw the most evident tokens of a power from on high accompanying the public ministrations. And as I had my reasons likewise for not being an itinerant, a regular and stated charge in the established church engaged my preference.

My fourth reason (the last I think it necessary to mention) being rather a point of experience, must depend chiefly upon my own testimony, and therefore, I need not enlarge much upon it. Superadded, however, to those which I have already stated, it greatly contributed to give full satisfaction to my mind: I mean, the proofs I had that the Lord, BY THE OPENINGS AND LEADINGS OF HIS PROVIDENCE, pointed out to me the situation in which I was to serve him. The first explicit notice I gave of my desire to enter the ministry, was to an intimate friend in your denomination, nearly six years before I was ordained. In the course of this interval, I made, and I received, a variety of applications and proposals; but every thing failed, and every door by which I sought admission remained

shut against me. I have already observed, that this state of suspense gave me leisure to examine the subject of church-government more closely, and that the result of my disquisitions was the gradual and, at length, the complete removal of the difficulties and exceptions I had at first hastily imbibed against the establishment. At length the Lord's time came; then obstacles, apparently insurmountable, suddenly and unexpectedly disappeared. Then I learned the reason of former disappointments. My way had been mercifully hedged up with thorns, to prevent me taking a wrong course, and to keep me waiting until the place and service of his own appointment were prepared and ready for me. The coincidence of many circumstances, which I cannot explain to another, gave me a very comfortable sense of the Lord's guidance. I received ordination in the church of England, with a πληροφορια, with wind and tide (if I may so speak) in my favour, with the most pleasing disposition of outward events, and the most assured persuasion in my own mind, that I was following the call, and doing the will of God; of which I had at that time little more doubt than if an angel had been sent from heaven to tell me so. Nor have I hesitated upon the point a single hour, from that day to this.

I think you will not be sorry to find I am drawing towards a close. Indeed I should be ashamed to have written so much merely on my own account. I began this ideal correspondence with you about seven years ago. More than one half of it was then written in a few weeks; but I felt a reluctance to proceed, because it seemed to be so much my own affair. But I have frequently thought since, that something upon the subject, written in a moderate and friendly spirit, (which

it has been my prayer and endeavour to preserve,) might, by the Lord's blessing, be a mean of promoting candour and benevolence among those who, whatever else they differ in, have one Lord, one faith, one hope. A desire of being instrumental in so good a work, has at length prevailed on me to revise what I had begun, to add what I thought further necessary for completing my design, and to send it abroad. I cannot give you particular reasons why I have not done it sooner, or why I do it now. Our times, plans, and purposes are under a superior guidance and direction, which it is our duty and our privilege always to acknowledge, though we cannot always distinctly discern it. I shall be happy if the event shall prove that I have been led to choose the fittest time, and to offer a word in season. They who love and preach the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, whatever name they bear among men, and whatever body of people they are united to, are engaged in one common cause; they are opposed by the same enemies; their severest conflicts and their sweetest comforts are derived from the same sources; and they will ere long meet in the same kingdom of glory, and join in the same songs of eternal praise, to Him who sitteth upon the throne, and to Him who redeemed us to God by his blood. How desirable, then, is it, that, while we live here, we should be at peace amongst ourselves, and live in the spirit of that love (the only infallible mark of our being truly the servants of Christ) which seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, but beareth, hopeth, and believeth all things!

As what I write to you is to appear in print, I think it proper to add, for my own sake, that my whole intention will be fulfilled by the publication. I do not

mean to enter into controversy; and, therefore, if these letters, contrary to my wish, should raise me an opponent, and give occasion to an answer, I shall not think myself bound to reply; unless I could be convicted of such wilful misrepresentation, as would render it my duty to ask pardon of God, and of the public.

I commend you and yours to the blessing of our Lord, and remain,

Your affectionate Friend.

March 1, 1784.

A

PLAN

OF

ACADEMICAL PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY,

IN A

LETTER TO A FRIEND.

Quin et piorum mentibus mysteria,
Contempta pravis, impie sapientibus
Occulta, Dominus luce proferet sua,
Et sacrosancti fœderis scientiam
Docebit. BUCH. Ps. xxv.

The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable.
JAMES, iii. 17.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1784.]

A PLAN,

&c.

Dear Sir,

I am not the son of a prophet, nor was I bred up among the prophets. I am quite a stranger to what passes within the walls of colleges and academies. I was as one born out of due time, and led, under the secret guidance of the Lord, by very unusual steps, to preach the faith which I once laboured to destroy. Since you know all this, how could you think of applying to me for the plan of an academical institution? Yet I confess the design you mentioned to me, in which some of your friends have thoughts of engaging, is so important in my view, that I am willing to come as near to your wishes as I can. I must not pretend to dictate a plan for the business which is now in contemplation. But if you will allow me to indulge a sort of reverie, and suppose myself a person of some consequence in Utopia, where I could have the modelling of every thing to my own mind; and that I was about to form an academy there, for the sole purpose of educating young men for the ministry of the Gospel—in this way, I am willing to offer you my thoughts upon the subject with great simplicity and freedom. And, if any of the regulations of my imaginary academy should be judged applicable to your design, you and your friends will be heartily welcome to them.

I should then, *suppositis supponendis*, in the first place,

lay down two or three important maxims, which I would hope never to lose sight of in the conduct of the affair; expecting that if I should begin without them I must stumble at the very threshold; and that whenever I should neglect them afterwards, all my care, and labour, and expense, would be from that time thrown away.

My first maxim is, That none but He who made the world, can make a minister of the Gospel. If a young man has capacity, culture and application may make him a scholar, a philosopher, or an orator; but a true minister must have certain principles, motives, feelings, and aims, which no industry or endeavours of men can either acquire or communicate. They must be given from above, or they cannot be received.

I adopt, as a second maxim, That the holy Scriptures are, both comprehensively and exclusively, the grand treasury of all that knowledge which is requisite and sufficient to make the minister, the man of God, thoroughly furnished for every branch of his office. If, indeed, no other studies were of subordinate importance, in order to a right understanding of the Scriptures, and especially to those who are not only to know for themselves, but are appointed to teach others also; then academical instruction would be needless, and I might supply my young men with every thing at once, by putting the Bible into their hands, and directing them to read it continually with attention and prayer. But my meaning is, that though there is such a concatenation in knowledge, that every branch of science may, by a judicious application, be rendered subservient to a minister's great design; yet no attainments in philology, philosophy, or in any or all the particulars which constitute the aggregate of what we call *learning*, can, in the least, contri-

bute to form a minister of the Gospel, any further than he is taught of God to refer them to, and to regulate them by, the Scripture as a standard. On the contrary, the more a man is furnished with this kind of apparatus, unless the leading truths of Scripture reign and flourish in his heart, he will be but the more qualified to perplex himself, and to mislead his hearers.

My third maxim is an inference from the two former. That the true Gospel minister who possesses these secondary advantages, though he may know the same things, and acquire his knowledge by the like methods, as other scholars do, yet he must know and possess them in a manner peculiar to himself. His criticisms, if he be a critic, will discover something which the greatest skill in grammatical niceties cannot of itself reach. If he be an orator, he will not speak in the artificial self-applauding language of man's wisdom, but in simplicity, and with authority, like one who feels the ground he stands upon, and knows to whom he belongs, and whom he serves. If he mentions a passage of history, it will not be to show his reading, but to illustrate or prove his point; and it will be evident, from his manner of speaking, that though he may have taken the facts from Tacitus or Robertson, his knowledge of the springs of human action, and of the superintendency of a Divine Providence, is derived from the word of God. And so of other instances.

In a word, if a young man was to consult me how he might be wise and learned in the usual sense of the words, I might advise him to repair to Oxford or Cambridge, or to twenty other places which I could name. But if I thought him really desirous of becoming wise to win souls, I would invite him to my New College in Utopia.

From these general observations I proceed more directly to my subject. You are then to suppose that I have taken my determination and counted the cost, and am now sitting down to contrive my plan. As a little attention to method may not be amiss, I shall endeavour to range my thoughts under four principal heads, concerning,

1. The Place.
2. The Tutor.
3. The Choice of Pupils.
4. The Course of Education.

1. And first, (as preachers sometimes say,) of the first. If the metropolis of Utopia should be any thing like ours, there are obvious reasons to forbid my fixing upon a spot very near it. I think, not nearer than a moderate day's journey. Nor would I wish it much further distant. Occasional visits to a great city, where there are many considerable ministers and Christians, should not be rendered impracticable; as they might furnish my young men with opportunities of forming connexions, and making observations, that might contribute to their usefulness in future life. But *procul ab urbe* will be my maxim. I should not only fear lest they should be contaminated by the vices which too generally prevail where men live in a throng: if they escaped these, I should still have apprehensions, lest the notice that might be taken of them, and the respect shown them by well-meaning friends, should imperceptibly seduce them into a spirit of self-importance, give them a turn for dress and company, and spoil that simplicity and dependence, without which I could have little hope of their success. I would wish it may be their grand aim to please the Lord, and under him, and for his sake, to please their tutor. They have, as yet,

no business with other people. Their tutor must be to them, *instar omnium.* Him they must love, reverence, and obey, and accurately watch his looks and every intimation of his will. But to secure this point, or even to have a reasonable prospect of attaining it, methinks it seems necessary to say, *Procul, procul, ab urbe, juvenes!* But the difference between a rural and a town situation is so striking at first view, that I suppose it quite needless to say more upon this head. I therefore proceed,

II. To the choice of my Tutor. Whoever he may be, when I have found him, and fixed him, I will take the liberty to tell him, that he is called to the most honourable and important office that man, in the present state of things, is capable of. The skilful and faithful tutor is not only useful to his pupils, considered as individuals, but he is remotely the instrument of all the blessings and benefits which the Lord is pleased to communicate by their ministry, in the course of their stated and occasional labours to the end of life. On the other hand, the errors and prejudices of an incompetent tutor, adopted and perpetuated by his disciples, may produce a long progression of evil consequences, which may continue to operate and multiply when he and they are dead and forgotten. For if the streams which are to spread far and wide throughout a land are poisoned in the very source, who can foresee how far the mischief may be diffused? Unless, therefore, I can procure a proper tutor, I must give up my design. It is better the youth should remain untaught, than that they should be taught to do wrong.

And I seem not easily satisfied on this head. My idea of the person to whom I could cheerfully intrust

the care of my academy, is not of an ordinary size. He seems to be one,

——Qualem nequeo monstrare, ac sentio tantum——

However, since we are upon Utopian ground, where we may imagine as largely as we please, I will attempt to delineate him. And were I to recommend a tutor to your friends, it should be the man who I thought came the nearest to the character I am about to describe.

For his first essential, indispensable qualification, I require a mind deeply penetrated with a sense of the grace, glory, and efficacy of the Gospel. However learned and able in other respects, he shall not have a single pupil from me, unless I have reason to believe that his heart is attached to the person of the Redeemer as God-man; that, as a sinner, his whole dependence is upon the Redeemer's work of love, his obedience unto death, his intercession and mediatorial fulness. His sentiments must be clear and explicit respecting the depravity of human nature, and the necessity and reality of the agency of the Holy Spirit, to quicken, enlighten, sanctify, and seal those who, under his influence, are led to Jesus for salvation. With respect to the different schemes or systems of divinity which obtain amongst those who are united in the acknowledgment of the above fundamental truths, I should look for my tutor amongst those who are called Calvinists; but he must not be of a curious, metaphysical, disputatious turn, a mere system-monger or party zealot. I seek for one who, having been himself taught the deep things of God by the Holy Spirit, in a gradual experimental manner; while he is charmed with the beautiful harmony and coincidence of all the doctrines of grace, is

at the same time aware of the mysterious depths of the divine counsels, and the impossibility of their being fully comprehended by our feeble understandings. Such a man will be patient and temperate in explaining the peculiarities of the Gospel to his pupils, and will wisely adapt himself to their several states, attainments, and capacities. After the example of the Great Teacher, he will consider what they can bear, and aim to lead them forward step by step, in such a manner, that the sentiments he instils into them may be their own, and not taken up merely upon the authority of his *ipse dixit.* He will propose the Scripture to them as *a consistent whole;* and guard them against the extremes into which controversial writers have forced themselves and each other, in support of a favourite hypothesis, so as, under a pretence of honouring some parts of the word of God, to overlook, if not to contradict, what is taught with equal clearness in other parts.

I wish my pupils to be well versed in useful learning, and therefore my tutor must be a learned man. He must not only be able to teach them whatever is needful for them to learn, but should be possessed of such a fund, as that the most forward and most promising among them may feel he has a decided superiority over them in every branch of their studies. Besides an accurate skill in the school classics, he should be well acquainted with books at large, and possessed of a general knowledge of the state of literature and religion, and the memorable events of history in the successive ages of mankind. Particularly, he should be well versed in ecclesiastical learning: for though it be true, that the bulk of it is little worth knowing, for its own sake, yet a man of genius and wisdom will draw from the whole mass a variety of observations suited to assist young

minds in forming a right judgment of human nature, of true religion, of its counterfeits, and of the abuses to which the name of religion is capable of being perverted. And he will likewise be able to select for their use, such authors and subjects as deserve their notice, from the surrounding rubbish in which they are almost buried.

My tutor should likewise be competently acquainted with the lighter accomplishments, which are usually understood by the term *Belles Lettres;* and a proper judge of them with respect both to their intrinsic and relative value. Their intrinsic value (to creatures who are posting to eternity) is not great; and a wise man, if he has not been tinctured with them in early life, will seldom think it worth his while to attend much to them afterwards. Yet in such an age as ours, it is some disadvantage to a man in public life, if he is quite a stranger to them. To a tutor they are in a manner necessary. It is further desirable that he should have a lively imagination, under the direction of a sound judgment, and a correct and cultivated taste. Otherwise, how can he assist and form the taste and judgment of his pupils, or direct or criticise their compositions?

Natural philosophy is not only a noble science, but one which offers the most interesting and profitable relaxations from the weight of severer studies. If the tutor be not possessed of this, he will lose a thousand opportunities of pointing out to his pupils the signatures of wisdom, power, and goodness, which the wonder-working God has impressed upon every part of the visible creation. But, at the same time, he should know where to stop, and what bounds to set to their inquiries. It is not necessary that either he or they should be numbered amongst the first astronomers or virtuosi of the

age. A life devoted to the service of God and souls, will not afford leisure for this diminutive pre-eminence. A general knowledge will suffice, even in the tutor. And while he lectures upon these subjects, he will caution them against spending too much time and thought upon those branches of philosophy which have but a very remote tendency to qualify them for preaching the Gospel. They are sent into the world, and into the academy, not to collect shells, and fossils, and butterflies, or to surprise each other with feats of electricity, but to win souls for Christ.

Perhaps I have said enough of my tutor's knowledge; and may now consider him with regard to his spirit, his methods of communicating what he knows to his pupils, and his manner of living with them, as a father with his children.

He must be διδακτικος, apt to teach. A man may know much, yet not have a facility of imparting his ideas. It is a talent and a gift of God, and therefore will always be found, in some good degree, in the person who is called of God to the tutor's office.

He will consider himself as a teacher, not only in the lecture-room, but in all places, and at all times, whether sitting in the house or walking by the way, if any of his pupils are with him. And he will love to have them always about him, so far as their studies and his own necessary avocations will admit.

Two things he will aim to secure from them—reverence and affection. Without maintaining a steady authority, he can do nothing; and unless they love him, every thing will go on heavily. But if the pupils are properly chosen, such a man as I have described will be both loved and feared. His spiritual and exemplary deportment, his wisdom and abilities, will command

their respect. His condescension and gentleness, his tenderness for their personal concerns, his assiduity in promoting their comfort, and doing them every friendly office in his power, will engage their love. These happy effects will be further promoted by their frequent mutual intercourse in prayer, by his expository lectures, and by his public ministry, if he be a preacher. Having his eye unto the Lord, and his heart in his work, a blessing from on high shall descend upon him and upon his house.

As human nature is the same in all places, it is probable that the Christians in Utopia may be divided among themselves with respect to rituals and modes of worship, in some such manner as we see and feel amongst us. Now here, as in every thing else, I would have my tutor a sort of phœnix, a man of a generous, enlarged spirit; a real friend of that liberty wherewith Jesus has made his people free from the shackles and impositions of men; one who uniformly judges and acts upon that grand principle of the New Testament, which is likewise a plain and obvious maxim of common sense; I mean, that the Lord of all, the Head of the church, is the alone Lord and Judge of conscience. I suppose my tutor has already taken his side; that he is either in the establishment, (if there be one in Utopia,) or, of course, a dissenter from it. And really, as to my scheme, I am indifferent which side he has taken; we shall not have a minute's debate about it, provided he acts consistently with the principles which I have assigned him. But as I myself, living in England, am of the established church, that you may not suspect me of partiality, I will suppose, and am ready to take it for granted, that he will be found to be an Utopian Dissenter.

On this supposition my imagination takes a flight, hastens into the midst of things, and anticipates as present what is yet future. Methinks I see the tutor indulging his scholars (as at proper seasons he often will) with an hour of free conversation; and from some question proposed to him concerning the comparative excellence or authority of different forms of church-government, taking occasion to open his mind to them, something in the following manner:—

"My dear children, you may have observed, that when, in the course of our lectures, I have been led to touch upon this subject, it has not been my custom to speak in a dogmatical style. I have sometimes intimated to you, that though every part of the Levitical worship was of positive divine institution, yet, when the people rested and trusted in their external forms, the Lord speaks as abhorring his own appointments. I have told you, upon the apostle's authority, that 'the kingdom of God consists not in meats and drinks, in names and forms, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Amidst the many divisions and subdivisions which obtain in the visible church, there are, in reality, but two sorts of people, the children of God, and the children of the world. The former sort, though partakers in one life and in one hope, yet living in successive ages, in various countries, under very different modes of government, education, and customs, it seems morally impossible that they should all agree, as by instinct, in one common mode of social worship. It is indeed said, that there is a plan prescribed in the New Testament, to which all ought to conform as nearly as possible. All parties say this in favour of their own

plans; and men, eminent for wisdom and holiness, are to be found among the advocates for each. But is it not strange, that if the Lord has appointed such a standard, the wisest and best of his people should differ so widely in their views of it, and deviate so far from each other when they attempt to reduce it to practice? Let others dispute; but as for you, my children, and me, let us rather adore the wisdom and goodness of our Lord. He who knew the heart of man, the almost invincible power of local prejudices, and what innumerable circumstances in different periods and places would render it impracticable for his people to tread exactly in the same line, has provided accordingly. The rules and lights he has afforded us, respecting the outward administration of his church, are recorded with such a latitude, that his true worshippers may conscientiously hope they are acceptable to him, though the plans which they believe to be consistent with his revealed will are far from corresponding with each other. It is sufficient that the apostolical canons, 'Let all things be done decently and in order,' 'to edification and in charity,' are universally binding; and were these on all sides attended to, smaller differences would be very supportable.

"I have often pointed out to you the wonderful analogy which the Lord has established, in many instances, between his works in the outward creation, and in his kingdom of grace. Perhaps the variety observable in the former may be one instance of this kind. When you see every vegetable arrayed in green, exactly of the same shade, or all tulips variegated in the same manner, as if painted from one common pattern,

then, and not before, expect to find true believers agreed in their views and practice respecting the modes of religion.

"Study, therefore, the Scriptures, my children, with humble prayer that the Lord may give you such views of these concerns as may fit you for the stations and services to which his providence may lead you. See with your own eyes, and judge for yourselves. This is your right. One is your Master, even Christ, and you need not, you ought not, to call any man master upon earth. But be content with this. Do not arrogate to yourselves the power of judging for others. Be willing that they should see with their own eyes likewise. The Papists, upon the ground of the assumed infallibility of their church, are, at least, consistent with themselves in condemning all who differ from them. Protestants confess themselves fallible, yet speak the same peremptory language.

"As to myself, if I had thought it preferable, upon the whole, to be a minister in our established church, I might probably have been one; but, I trust, I am where the Lord would have me be, and I am satisfied. My desire for you is to see you able ministers of the New Testament. As to the part of the vineyard in which you are to labour, wait simply upon the Lord, and he, in his good time, will point it out to you. If Scripture and conscience lead you to prefer the dissenting line, I shall say, it is well, provided you embrace it with a liberal spirit, and have a better warrant for your choice than merely the example of your tutor. Should you determine otherwise, I shall still say, it is well, provided I see you disinterested, humble, and faithful. Your being edu-

cated under my roof is a circumstance not likely to facilitate your admission into the establishment; but if the Lord, in his providence, should open to any of you a door on that side, and incline you to enter, I shall not dissuade you from it, as though I thought it sinful. I shall only wish you to attend to that advice which cannot mislead you—'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy path'."

Thus far my tutor.—Or, since I am in a supposing humour, if you will give me leave to make one supposition more, that it is possible there may be Methodists and Itinerants in Utopia, as we have in England, he would then perhaps continue his discourse a little longer, as follows:—

"Though the pastoral care of a single congregation is the service which the Lord has allotted me, and I have not seen it my duty to engage in any thing which might lead me long or far from the people to whom I am related, I am no enemy to itinerant preaching. My Lord and Saviour himself, his apostles and first servants, were all itinerants; and I believe that houses and ships, hills and plains, the side of a river or the sea-shore, are all fit places for preaching the Gospel, and sufficiently authorized as such by the highest precedents. I cannot therefore censure, much less condemn, a practice which the scripture warrants, and to which, I doubt not, the Lord has given abundant testimony in our own times, by making the word thus dispensed effectual to the conversion and consolation of many souls. I believe, indeed, that some persons, not duly acquainted with their own hearts, nor with what is requisite to constitute a preacher, have too

hastily supposed themselves called to preach the Gospel, when the event has proved that the Lord had neither called them to his service, nor furnished them for it. And I think, if it should generally be allowed that young men are proper judges in their own cause, and have a right to commence preachers when, or where, or how they please, without the advice or approbation of ministers more experienced than themselves, many inconveniences may and must follow. I could wish every young man to be so impressed with the force of the apostle's question, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' that he should rather need invitation and encouragement to preach, than be disposed to run hastily into the work, as the horse rusheth into the battle. But I must not expect every thing to be managed according to my wish. I have mourned over the miscarriages of some itinerant preachers; but I have been much comforted by the good conduct and success of others. It is neither my business nor my intention to persuade you to this course; but if, when you are properly instructed and qualified for the ministry, I should see any of you disposed to go forth in the itinerant way; should I be satisfied of your principles and motives, and have reason to hope your zeal was tempered with humility; I know not that I durst refuse my consent. For, as I have often told you, the honour of my Lord and Saviour, and the welfare of precious souls, are far dearer to me than the detached interests of any party; and if Christ be faithfully and successfully preached, in whatever way, and by whatever instruments, he is pleased to work, I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

I think what I have said of the tutor, and what he

has just now said for himself, may suffice to give you an idea of the person I would choose, and that it is now time to consider,

III. The Choice of Pupils. I would have them all resident with the tutor, and therefore their number at one time can be but small: especially as I should wish him to undertake every branch of their education. He might have an assistant to teach the rudiments of the languages, a service that would otherwise take up much of the time which he could better employ; but he must do all the rest himself. I suppose, therefore, that ten, or at the most twelve, pupils will be a sufficient number to be under his care at once. The man I have described would not be mercenary, but the labourer is worthy of his reward. As I shall find him work enough to take up his whole time, his pay ought to be competent and liberal; and, as I have supposed myself rich enough to execute my plan in what manner I please, I hope I shall not starve my tutor, nor put his economical talents on the stretch to contrive how to squeeze and save a pittance out of the sum allotted for their board. I would fix the boarding upon equitable and moderate terms, distinct from his salary, which should be handsome, and always the same, whether he had one pupil with him, or ten or twelve. It would be my part to keep the number up, but if I neglected it, he should be no loser; nor ought he to be dependent upon my caprice or negligence; but he should stand upon an easy, settled footing, so as to be free, not only from want, but from anxious care, that he might be able to attend his business without distraction.

And now my house is ready, where shall I find young men to fill it? I must look around me, and request my friends to look out for me. When I have

found two I will send them, and the rest as they offer. Perhaps it would be one of the chief difficulties attending my scheme, to collect ten or twelve youths worthy of such a tutor.

They must be serious. I mean they must have an awakened experimental sense of the truth and goodness of the Gospel. This is a point not easily ascertained, especially in young persons. There is often a something that resembles it, which, upon trial, does not prove satisfactory. However, my part will be to look to the Lord for guidance, and then judge as well as I can. But I hope no persuasion or recommendation, no desire of pleasing or obliging a friend, would prevail on me to admit one who I did not verily believe was a subject of the grace of God. Who would undertake to teach a parrot algebra? Yet this would be as practicable as to make those able and faithful preachers, whom the Lord has not first made Christians.

They must likewise have capacity. It is not necessary that their abilities should be of the first-rate, (perhaps but few of such are called,) but some tolerable measure of natural abilities, capable of being opened and improved by education, seems almost necessary in the person who aims to be a minister of the Gospel. At least it will be necessary upon my plan; for, as my tutor cannot take many, I must give the preference to such as may both do him credit by their proficiency under his care, and be qualified to profit others when they leave him.

Ex quovis ligno Mercurius non fit.

If the heart be changed and sanctified by grace, a person of the weakest natural understanding will acquire, under divine teaching, all that is necessary to

enable him to fill up his station in private life with propriety, to overcome the world, and to make his own calling and election sure. But a preacher must have gifts as well as grace, to be able to divide the word of truth as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. And, therefore, though the Lord was once pleased by a dumb ass to rebuke the foolishness of a prophet, I am not forward to acknowledge those as ambassadors sent by him, (however well-meaning they may be,) who seem either to have no message to deliver, or no ability to deliver it.

I would likewise be satisfied, as much as possible, concerning the views and motives which make them desirous of devoting themselves to the ministry. Some desires of this kind are very frequently found in young converts. When a sense of eternal things is new and lively upon their minds, and they look round upon a world lying in wickedness, they are much affected. The obligations they feel to the Redeemer, a grief that he should be so little known, so little loved, and a compassion for their fellow-sinners, whom they see liable to perish for lack of knowledge, make them often long to be employed, and sometimes constrain them to run before they are sent. But if they are not really designed by the Lord for this service, either their desires towards it gradually subside, and they yield themselves to his appointment in other paths of life; or if they unadvisably venture upon it, they are seldom either comfortable or useful. They soon feel themselves unequal to the work; or, if self-conceit prevents them from feeling it, their hearers are very sensible of it. They often mistake errors for truth; they retail scraps and shreds of sentiments which they pick up from others, and for want of judgment misapply them. Thus hypocrites

are encouraged, and those whom the Lord would have comforted are made sad. They think that preaching with power consists in vociferation and distorted attitudes; and that to utter every thing that comes upon their minds, without end or side, (as we say,) without any regard to text, context, occasion, or connexion, is to preach extempore. Too often Satan gains open advantage over them. They are puffed up with pride, taken in snares, and perhaps fall into such woful miscarriages as at length ruin their characters, and stop their mouths. It is, therefore, of great importance to be workers together with the Lord in this business; to choose those whom he chooses, to bring forward those whom he is preparing, and, if possible, none but these. We cannot indeed know the heart, but we may be wary and circumspect in judging by such lights as we can procure; and we ought to be so. Perhaps, after all, we may be mistaken in some instances; but if we have done our best, we have done well, and shall not be blameable for such consequences as we could not possibly foresee or prevent. If a candidate for the academy appears to be of a self-diffident and humble spirit, to have some acquaintance with his own heart, a tolerable capacity, a turn for application, and an unblameable character as to his personal conduct, I shall be disposed to admit him. But I would leave the final decision of his fitness to the tutor; for which purpose it may be proper that he should be under the tutor's eye, for a limited time, as a probationer.

IV. The next point I am to consider is, the course of studies they should pursue; though I am rather inclined to give this up, absolutely and without reserve, to the tutor, who, if he answers my description, must be the most proper person to institute a plan for him-

self, and would have no need of my assistance. But if his humility and his good opinion of me should lead him to desire my advice, he shall have it. I do not mean as to little circumstantials, but I would submit to him, in a general and miscellaneous way, such hints as may occur to me upon the subject. And I submit them to you beforehand.

A few things may be previously noticed, which, though they do not properly belong to their academical studies, are well worthy of attention.

A minister is a soldier of Jesus Christ, and, as such, is to expect and endure hardship. It is well to have this in our eye in the education of young men. They are not called to be gentlemen, but soldiers; not to live delicately, but to prepare for hardship. They should therefore be advised and accustomed to prefer a plain and frugal manner of life, and to avoid multiplying those wants which luxury and folly would prompt us to multiply almost *ad infinitum*. A propensity to indulgence either in the quantity or quality of food, is a meanness unworthy of a man, still more unsuitable to the character of a Christian, and scandalous in a minister. I am no advocate for a monkish austerity, or a scrupulous, superstitious, self-denial, which will almost starve the body to feed the pride of the heart. It is, however, very desirable to possess, in early life, a habit of temperance, a mastery over appetite, and a resolute guard against every thing that has a tendency to blunt the activity of the spirits. And youth is the proper season for gaining this mastery, which, if the golden opportunity be then lost, is seldom thoroughly acquired afterwards.

A propriety in dress should also be consulted. Neatness is commendable; but a student in divinity should

keep at a distance from the air and appearance of a fop. A finical disposition in this article not only occasions a waste of time and expense, but is a token of a trifling turn of mind, and exposes the fine, self-admiring youth, to the contempt or pity of the wise and good.

Further, a habit of rising early should be resolutely formed. It redeems much time, and chiefly of those hours which are most favourable to study or devotion. It likewise cuts off the temptation to sitting up late, a hurtful and preposterous custom, which many students unwarily give into, and which they cannot so easily break, when the bad effects of it upon their health convince them too late of their imprudence.

Let them be guarded against the snares attending a large acquaintance, and unnecessary visiting. The tutor will, doubtless, maintain authority and good discipline in his house, and not suffer any of his pupils to be absent from family-worship, nor abroad after a fixed hour, without his express permission, which should not be given but for solid and just reasons. And he cannot be too careful, both by advice and vigilance, to prevent them from forming any female connexions while under his roof, however honourable the views, or deserving the person may be. Love and courtship are by no means favourable to study, nor indeed to devotion, at a time when their present engagements, and the uncertainty of their prospects in future life, render a settlement by marriage improper, if not impracticable.

Much study is weariness to the flesh; and the body and the mind are so nearly connected, that what affects the one will have an influence upon the other. Relaxation and exercise are therefore necessary at proper seasons, for those who wish to preserve cheerfulness

and strength for service, and not to become old and disabled, through lowness of spirits, infirmities, and pains, before old age actually overtakes them. Riding is a manly, unexceptionable exercise, where it can be conveniently practised. But walking is, I suppose, equally healthful, and requires neither expense nor preparation. That the students may have an object in view when we go from home, the tutor will probably point out to them some of the Lord's poor, who live at convenient distances, whom they may visit, and comfort with their sympathy, advice, and prayers, as well as administer to the relief of their necessities, according to their ability. Thus, while they are consulting their own health, they may at the same time imitate Him, "who went about doing good." And in such visits they may meet with many hints from poor believers, concerning the Lord's wisdom and faithfulness in his dealings with them, and of the power of true religion, to confirm what they read upon these subjects, and probably some hints which their books will not supply them with. Further, if, when they are abroad together, they will attempt such conversation as warmed the hearts of the disciples when walking to Emmaus; and if, when alone, they adopt the pattern of Isaac, who went out into the field to meditate; then all the time they can thus employ may be set down to the account of their studies, for few of their hours can be more profitably improved.

But what, and how, are they to study? The answer to this question depends upon another, What is the object of their studies? It is to make them not merely scholars, but ministers thoroughly furnished for their office. The particulars I aim at in placing them with my tutor are such as follow:

1. An orderly, connected, and comprehensive knowledge of the common places and topics of divinity, considered as a whole; a system of truth, of which the holy Scripture is the sole fountain, treasury, and standard.

2. A competent acquaintance with sacred literature; by which I mean such writings, ancient and modern, as are helpful to explain or elucidate difficulties in Scripture arising from phraseology, from allusion to customs and events not generally known, and from similar causes, and which, therefore, cannot be well understood without such assistance.

3. Such a general knowledge of philosophy, history, and other branches of polite literature, as may increase the stock of their ideas, afford them just conceptions of the state of things around them, furnish them with a fund for variety, enlargement, and illustration; that they may be able to enliven and diversify their discourses, which, without such a fund, will be soon apt to run in a beaten track, and to contain little more than a repetition of the same leading thoughts, without originality or spirit.

4. An ability to methodize, combine, distinguish, and distribute the ideas thus collected by study, so as readily to know what is properly adapted to the several subjects to be treated of, and to the several parts of the same subject. When the pupils are thus far accomplished, then I shall hope,

5. That they will in good time be able to preach extempore. I do not mean without forethought or plan, but without a book, and without the excessive labour of committing their discourses to memory. This ability of speaking to an auditory in a pertinent and collected manner, with freedom and decorum, with

fidelity and tenderness, looking at them instead of looking at a paper, gives a preacher a considerable advantage, and has a peculiar tendency to command and engage the attention. It likewise saves much time, which might be usefully employed in visiting his people. It is undoubtedly a gift of God, but, like many other gifts, to be sought not only by prayer, but in the use of means. The first essays will ordinarily be weak and imperfect; but the facility increases, till at length a habit is formed by diligence and perseverance. I should not think my academy complete, unless my tutor was attentive to form his pupils to the character of public speakers.

General rules admit of exceptions. I have myself known persons, who, with plain sense, true humility, and a spirit devoted to the Lord and dependent upon him, have, with little or no assistance from men, proved solid, exemplary, and useful ministers. Such instances convince me that, however expedient learning may be, it is not indispensably necessary for a minister, especially for one who is to labour in a retired situation, and amongst plain, unlettered hearers. I would not, therefore, preclude my tutor from all opportunity of being useful to persons of this description, who would be glad of such helps from him as they might receive in their mother-tongue, when the time of life, or particular circumstances, might render the study of languages and science inconvenient. And in general, as the capacities, dispositions, and prospects of a number of pupils would, of course, be different; I should leave it to his discretion to conduct them to the same grand ends of service, by such difference of method as he should judge most suitable to each; so as not to discourage or overburden the truly deserving, nor to permit (if it can be prevented) the more studious and

successful, to set too high a value upon their superior accomplishments. For, after all, it must be owned, and ought to be remembered, that grace and divine wisdom are of unspeakably greater importance than scholastic attainments without them. We are sure, that though a man had the knowledge of all mysteries, the gifts of tongues and miracles, and the powers of an angel, if he has not likewise humility, spirituality, and love, he is in the sight of God but as sounding brass or a noisy cymbal. He may answer the purpose of a church bell, to call a congregation together, but has little prospect of doing them good when they are assembled. But to return to my *professed* students: and,

I. As to the study of Theology. How far it may be expedient to adopt some system or body of divinity as a text or ground whereon to proceed, I am not quite determined; and which of these learned summaries is the best, I shall not attempt to decide till I have read them all. My tutor will have more of this knowledge; I shall therefore refer the choice, if it be necessary to choose one, to him. Calvin, Turretin, Witsius, and Ridgeley, are those with which I have formerly been most acquainted. But, indeed, of these, at present, I can remember little more than that I have read them, or the greatest part of them. I recollect just enough to say, that though I approve and admire them all, I have at the same time my particular objections to them all, as to this use of them. The Bible is my body of divinity; and were I a tutor myself, I believe I should prefer the Epistles of St. Paul, as a summary, to any human systems I have seen, especially his Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, the Hebrews, and Timothy. There are few uninspired writings, however excellent in the main, but bear some marks of the infirmities, attach-

ments, and prepossessions, which, in a greater or less degree, are inseparable from the present state of human nature. I would have my pupils draw their knowledge as immediately from the fountain head as possible. I care not how extensive and various their reading of good authors may be under their tutor's eye; the more so the better. He will improve the differences they will find among learned and spiritual men, into an argument to engage them to study the Scripture more closely, and to bring every debated sentiment to be tried, and finally determined, by that unerring standard. He will teach them to collect the detached portions of truth wherever they meet with them; to borrow from all, but to give themselves up implicitly to the dictates of none. For I know no author who is worthy the honour of being followed absolutely and without reserve.

I am told (for I know nothing of academies but from hearsay) that it is customary for pupils to write after the tutor, who reads his lecture. If I should adopt this custom, I would not confine myself to it. Such written lectures, if well executed, must be good patterns to form the students to closeness in method and style. But I should likewise wish the tutor to give them unpremeditated lectures. Great masters of music (it is said) frequently feel an impetus in extempore playing, which enables them to execute off hand such strains as they wish to repeat, but cannot; their taste assuring them that they are superior in kind to what they can ordinarily attain when they study and compose by rule. Thus a tutor who thoroughly understands his subject, and speaks from the fulness of his heart, will, now and then, at least, feel a happy moment, when he will seem to possess new powers. His thoughts and expressions at such a time will have a peculiar precision and force,

and will possibly illuminate and affect his hearers more than his regular and written lectures. When he has done speaking, let the pupils retire and commit to writing what they can recollect of such discourses, keeping to his method, but using their own expressions. These exercises would engage their attention, employ their invention and ingenuity, accustom them to consider the subjects in different lights, and contribute to make the knowledge they derive from him more their own, than by being always confined to transcribe, line by line, what was read to them.

I would not have the pupils put upon the needless and hurtful attempt of proving first principles. May not a man read lectures upon optics without previously proving the existence of the sun? My tutor will not coldly lay before his students the arguments pro and con, and then leave them to decide as evidence to them appears, whether there be a God, or whether the Scriptures be of divine inspiration, or not. So, likewise, with respect to the different sentiments on the primary points of Scripture, as whether the Saviour be man or angel, or God manifest in the flesh; or concerning the different acceptations of the words, *depravity*, *guilt*, *faith*, *grace*, *atonement*, and the like; he will speak with a becoming confidence and certainty on which side the truth lies. He will, indeed, furnish them with solid confutations of error, from Scripture and experience, but he will take care to let them know that these things are already settled, and proposed to them, not as candidates for their good opinion, but as truths which demand and deserve their attention. My tutor will not dogmatize, and expect them to adopt his opinions without any better reason than because they are his. He will endeavour to throw every light he is

master of upon the subject; but, at the same time, he will speak as a teacher, not as an inquirer; as one who speaks that which he has known, and testifies that which he has seen. He will not attempt to fill their heads with a detail of all the cavils which pride and sophistry have started against the truths of God; nor so far flatter his pupils, as to suppose them competent judges when they have weighed and compared the several argumentations. But he will rather warn them of their natural bias to the erroneous side, and guard them against the arts of those who, with fair words and fine speeches, beguiled the unprincipled and unwary. A tutor is a guide, and, if worthy of his office, must be able to say, without hesitation, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Should he be seduced, by the specious sounds of candour and freedom of inquiry, to take the opposite method, and think it his duty to puzzle his scholars with all the waking dreams, objections, and evasions by which men, reputed wise, have opposed the simplicity of the faith once delivered to the saints; I should fear they would be more likely to turn out sceptics than ministers of the Gospel.

Nor should he, with my consent, lay down a scheme of what is commonly called natural religion, as a *substratum* whereon to build a religion of divine revelation. It is needful that he should give his pupils a just idea of the religion of fallen nature; but he will remind them, that the few valuable sentiments occasionally found in the writings of the Heathen philosophers and moralists were not their own. They are all represented as having travelled for their knowledge, and all in the same route, into Phœnecia or Egypt, into the neighbourhood of the only people who, at that time, were favoured with the oracles of God; and may therefore

be justly supposed to have derived the detached particles of truth they acquired from that people, either by immediate converse with them, or from their inspired books, especially from the time they were translated into the Greek language. He will point out to them the strong probability that Epictetus and the later philosophers were equally, or more indebted, to the Christians and the New Testament. With respect to the sceptical moralists and reasoners of modern times, the proof will be still clearer and stronger, that their best notions are borrowed from the religion they attempt to depreciate. My tutor, in order to satisfy them how far the powers of unassisted fallen nature can proceed in the investigation of religious and moral truths, will set before them the progress which has actually been made in this way by the negroes in Africa, or the American Indians. With such a picture of natural religion in their view, I should hope they would be led most cordially to praise God for the inestimable gift of his Holy Word; without the help of which, the boasted light of nature is darkness that may be felt.

In my academy, I would have no formal disputations upon points of divinity. If it be necessary to sharpen or exercise their wits by disputing, to which, under proper regulations, I should not object, there are topics in abundance at hand. Let them dispute, if they please, for or against the motion of the earth. Let them determine whether Cæsar or Pompey was the better man; or, in what respects Cato, who chose to die rather than venture to look Cæsar in the face, discovered more fortitude or true greatness of mind, than the slave who elopes from his master for fear of the lash. Let them contend whether learning has, upon the whole, been productive of most good, or of most mischief, to man-

kind. My tutor can supply them with a thousand questions of this kind. But to set a young man to put his ingenuity to the stretch, either to maintain a gross error, or to oppose a known and important truth, is, in my view, not only dangerous, but little less than a species of profaneness. What must the holy angels, who, with humble admiration, contemplate the wisdom and glory of God displayed in the Gospel; what must they think of the arrogance of sinful worms, who presume so far to trifle with the doctrines and mysteries he has revealed, as to degrade them into subjects for school exercise, and logical prize-fighting? Can it be possible to maintain a spirit of reverence and dependence amidst the noise of such malapert discussions? And if the youth to whom the wrong side of the question is committed, should, by superior address, nonplus and silence his antagonist, my heart would be in pain for him, lest he should, from that moment, be prejudiced against the truth which he had insulted with success, and think it really indefensible, because the other was not able to defend it.

Having been so long on the first article, I must endeavour to be more brief on those which follow.

II. By sacred literature, I chiefly mean philology, criticism, and antiquities, so far as they are employed in the illustration of Scripture. In these studies, if there be a proper application in the pupils, little more will be needful on the tutor's part, than to put suitable books into their hands, to superintend their progress, and to obviate difficulties they may meet with. I would wish them not only to read the Scriptures in the Hebrew and Greek originals, but to be tolerable masters of the construction in both languages. This attainment is certainly not necessary to a minister; but they

who apply themselves to the study of divinity in early life will have time enough to acquire it, and the acquisition will be well worth their labour. If not necessary, it will be found very expedient and useful, and when the difficulties of the first entrance and rudiments are surmounted, will be very pleasant. The tutor will then enliven their study, and facilitate their advance, by reading a chapter with them in each Testament daily, or frequently intermingling critical or expository strictures as he goes along. And he will, probably, furnish those students who have taste, with Dr. Lowth's *Prælectiones de Poesi Hebræa*, which will enable them to judge of the style and idiom of the Hebrew Bible, and particularly of the style and beauties of the Hebrew poetry. Blackwall's sacred classics may be added for the Greek.

Since the learned have of late years condescended to lay open the way to the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, by publishing lexicons, grammars, and other helps in the English tongue, the knowledge of the Latin is less needful to a Bible student than it was formerly. But as there are many valuable books in Latin, and not yet translated, I must wish our pupils so far acquainted with the Latin language as to be able to read good authors in it. But as they are not to preach in Latin, an accurate skill is hardly worth their attempting, unless they have had a classical school education before they come to the academy. The mind is incapable of too many acquisitions: life is short, and more important business awaits them, in subserviency to which every thing else must be conducted.

Books on criticism and on Scripture antiquities are at hand in plenty. It will be impossible to read them all. The selection belongs not to me, but to the tutor. The *Synopsis Criticorum*, Godwin, and Jennings, will

perhaps be of the number he will choose. A good ecclesiastical history seems to be still a desideratum. A mass of materials, so far as it goes, is already prepared in the Magdeburg Centuriators, which affords a striking monument of the compiler's patience; but it would likewise require some patience in the reader who should undertake to go through it. Mosheim is, perhaps, the best book we have upon the subject, if the reader knows so much of himself and of the work of grace, as to prevent him from being misled by him, when treating on subjects which he does not appear to have rightly understood. But as to facts, I believe he is in general worthy of credit. Bingham's Antiquities may deserve inspection, if it be only to show how soon and how generally the beautiful simplicity of the Gospel was corrupted by those who professed it. Dupin and Dr. Cave's *Historia Literaria Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum*, are still more valuable; but the characters of the writers, and their strong prepossessions in favour of antiquity should be known and allowed for.

III. Much time cannot be allowed in our academy for the pursuit of polite literature. But an entrance may be made, and a relish for it acquired, under the direction and restraint of the tutor, which may provide the students with a profitable amusement for leisure hours in future life; for in this knowledge they may advance from year to year. A perusal of such books as Rollin on the *Belles Lettres*, Bossuet's Universal History, Derham and Ray on the Creation, and a few of our best poets, may suffice while they are students. Other books will occasionally come in their way; for the tutor should have a well chosen library, for the accommodation of his pupils; but he will guard them against spending too much time in this line of reading. For,

though it has its subordinate advantages, it may, if too much indulged, divert them from the main point. And they should be taught to refer every thing they read to the principles of Scripture, to the knowledge of the heart of man, and the works, the ways, the wisdom, and providence of God; otherwise reading will tend to make them wise in their own conceit. I make short work with this article, and hasten to consider,

IV. What may be helpful, (by the divine blessing,) to enable the pupils to communicate the fruits of their knowledge to advantage in the public ministry, that they may appear workmen that need not be ashamed. For this, as I have formerly intimated, their chief and immediate dependence must be on the Lord. He alone can give them a mouth and wisdom for his service; and without the unction from on high, the study of divinity, and every thing relative to it, will be but like learning the art of navigation on shore, which is very different from the knowledge necessary to the mariner who is actually called to traverse the ocean. But dependence upon the Lord should be no discouragement to the use of means.

I would have my students good logicians. The logic of the schools is, in a great measure, a cramp, forced, and formal affair, and may possibly have made almost as many pedants and sophists as good reasoners. But Dr. Watts has furnished us with a system of logic in a more intelligible and amiable form, and divested it of the solemn impertinences with which it was encumbered. As the rules of grammar are themselves drawn from the language they are designed to regulate, so good logic is no more than the result of observations upon the powers of the human mind: and thus we see, that many people of plain sense are passable

logicians, though they never saw a book upon the subject, and, perhaps, do not understand the meaning of the term. But they may be much assisted in the habits of thinking, judging, and reasoning, and in disposing their thoughts in an advantageous method, by rules judiciously formed and arranged. In this view I judge Dr. Watts' logic, with his subsequent treatise on the improvement of the mind, to be very valuable. And, together with the more scientific parts of the subject, he will provide my pupils with a great variety of hints for their conduct, and for distinguishing the principles and conduct of others. These books should be frequently read, and closely studied, and will afford the tutor an extensive scope for their instruction. Unless a man can conceive and define his subject clearly, distinguish and enumerate the several parts, and know how to cast them into a convenient order and dependence, he cannot be a masterly preacher. And though a good understanding may supersede the necessity of logical rules, it will likewise derive advantage from them.

I have not so much to say in favour of another branch of artificial assistance; though much stress has been sometimes laid upon it. We must not, however, quite omit it; for an academic will be expected to know that the learned have thought proper to give Greek names to certain forms and figures of speech, in the use of which the common people, without being aware of their skill in rhetoric, are little less expert than the learned themselves. When he can repeat these hard names, with their etymologies and significations, rhetoric can do but little more for him. The rules it professes to teach are, in general, needless to those who have genius, and useless to those who have none. If a youth has not a turn for eloquence, stuffing his head

with the names of tropes and figures will not give it him. To know the names of the tools in an artificer's shop, is one thing; but to have skill to use them as a workman, is something very different. Here the tutor will use his discretion; for if any of his pupils are not likely to be orators, he will take care that, if he can prevent it, they shall not be pedants, nor value themselves on retailing a list of technical terms, of which they know neither the use nor the application. At the best, too much attention to artificial rules will make but an artificial orator, and rather qualify the student to set off himself than his subject. The grand characteristic of the Gospel orator is simplicity. Many years have passed since I read De Fenelon's Treatise on Pulpit Eloquence; but I hope my tutor will put it into the hands of his pupils. It remains to inquire,

V. How the pupils are to be assisted and directed, that they may be able to preach extempore: an ability which I suppose to be ordinarily attainable by all who are called of God to preach the Gospel, if they will diligently apply themselves to attain it, in the use of proper means. I do not expect they will succeed in this way, to my wish, without prayer, study, effort, and practice. For, as I have already hinted, I mean something more by it than speaking at random.

A well known observation of Lord Bacon is much to my present purpose. It is to this effect: That reading makes a full man, writing an exact man, and speaking a ready man. The approved extempore preacher must have a fund of knowledge collected from various reading; and it would not be improper to read some books, with the immediate design of comparing his style and manner with approved models. It might be wished that the best divines were always the best

writers: but the style of many of them is quaint, involved, and obscure. Some books that are well written have little else to recommend them, yet may be useful for this purpose; and the periodical writings of Addison and Johnson abound with judicious observations on men and manners, besides being specimens of easy and elegant composition. Among writers in divinity, I would recommend Dr. Watts and Dr. Witherspoon as good models. By perusing such authors with attention, I hope the pupils will acquire a taste for good writing, and be judges of a good style. Perspicuity, closeness, energy, and ease, are the chief properties of such a style. On the contrary, a style that is either obscure, redundant, heavy, or affected, cannot be a good one. But I cannot advise them to copy the late Mr. Hervey. His dress, though it fits him, and he does not look amiss in it, is rather too gaudy and ornamented for a divine. He had a fine imagination, an elegant taste, and shows much precision and judgment in his choice of words: but though his luxuriant manner of writing has many of the excellencies both of good poetry and good prose, it is, in reality, neither the one nor the other. An injudicious imitation of him has spoiled some persons for writers, who, if they could have been content with a plain and natural mode of expression, might have succeeded tolerably well.

The pupil likewise must write as well as read; and he should write frequently. Let him fill one commonplace book after another, with extracts from good authors. This method, while it tends to fix the passages, or their import, in his mind, will also lead him to make such observations respecting the order, and construction, and force of words, as will not so readily occur to his notice by reading only. Then let him try his own

hand, and accustom himself to write his thoughts; sometimes in notes and observations on the books he reads; sometimes in the form of essays or sermons. He will do well likewise to cultivate a correspondence with a few select friends; for epistolary writing seems nearest to that easiness of manner which a public speaker should aim at.

I would not have his first attempts to speak publicly be in the preaching way, or even upon spiritual subjects. It might probably abate the reverence due to divine truth, to employ it in efforts of ingenuity. Suppose the tutor should read to them a passage of history, and require them to repeat the relation to him the next day, in their own manner. He would then remark to them if they had omitted any essential part, or used improper expressions. Or they might be put upon making speeches or declamations on such occasions or incidents as he should propose. By degrees, such of them as are judged to be truly spiritual and humble, might begin to speak upon a text of Scripture, in the presence of the tutor and pupils; and I should hope this might, in due time, become a part of the morning or evening devotions in the family. But let them be especially cautioned not to trifle with holy things, nor profane the great subjects of Scripture, by making them mere exhibitions and trials of skill.

Thus, by combining much reading and writing with their attempts to speak, and all under the direction of a judicious tutor, I shall have a cheerful hope, that the pupils will gradually attain a readiness and propriety of speech; and when actually sent out to preach, will approve themselves scribes well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom, qualified to bring forth from the

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treasury of their knowledge and experience, things new and old, for the edification of their hearers.

And now I may draw towards a close. There are some branches of science, or what is so called, on which I lay but little stress. I have no great opinion of metaphysical studies. For pneumatology and ethics, I would confine my pupils to the Bible. The researches of wise men in this way, which have not been governed by the word of God, have produced little but uncertainty, futility, or falsehood. My tutor will, I hope, think it sufficient to show the pupils how successfully these wise and learned reasoners reciprocally refute each other's hypothesis. And if he informs them more in detail of the extravagances which have been started concerning the nature and foundation of moral virtue; or of the dreams of philosophers, some of whom would exclude *matter*, and others would exclude *mind*, out of the universe; he will inform them likewise that he does not thereby mean properly to add to their stock of knowledge, (for we should in reality have been full as wise if these subtilties had never been heard of,) but only to guard them against being led into the mazes of error and folly, by depending too much on the reveries of philosophers.

After this delineation of my plan, it will be needless to inform you that I do not propose my academy to be a spiritual hot bed, in which the pupils shall be raised, and ripened into teachers, almost immediately upon their admission. I have allowed for a few excepted cases; but, in general, it is my design that their education shall be comprehensive and exact. I would have them learn before they undertake to teach; and their sufficiency to be evidenced by a better testi-

monial than their own good opinion of themselves. "A scribe well instructed," "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," "an able minister of the New Testament," are Scriptural expressions, intimating what ought to be the qualifications of those who undertake the office of a preacher or pastor. The apostle expressly forbids a novice to be employed in these services. And though in the present day this caution is very much disregarded by persons who undoubtedly mean well, yet, I believe, the neglect of Scriptural rules (which are not arbitrary, but founded in a perfect knowlege of human nature) will always produce great inconveniences. I shall think a young man of tolerable abilities makes a very good improvement of his time, if the tutor finds him fit for actual service after three or four years' close attention to his studies.

But what have I done ?—In compliance with your request, I have been led to give such an undisguised view of my sentiments on this interesting subject, that though I feel myself a cordial friend to all sides and parties who hold the head, and agree in the grand principles of our common faith, I fear lest some of every party will be displeased with me. I rely on your friendship, and your knowledge of me, to bear witness for me, that I would not willingly offend or grieve a single person: and you can likewise testify, that I did not set myself to work; that I was much surprised when you proposed it to me; and that you have reason to believe my regard for you, and for the design you informed me of, were the only motives of my venturing upon the task you assigned me.

I have by no means exhausted the subject, though I hope I have not omitted any thing that very materially relates to it. If I was really in Utopia, and to carry

my plan into execution, other regulations would probably occur which have at present escaped me.

——res, ætas, usus,
Semper aliquid apportent novi.

What I have written I submit to the candour of you and your friends; adding my prayers, that the Great Head of the Church, the Fountain of grace, and Author of salvation, may direct your deliberations, and bless you with wisdom, unanimity, and success, in whatever you may attempt for the honour of his name and the good of souls.

I am, dear Sir,

Your sincere Friend and Servant,

OMICRON.

May 14, 1782.

A

MONUMENT

TO THE

PRAISE OF THE LORD'S GOODNESS,

AND

TO THE MEMORY OF

DEAR ELIZA CUNINGHAM.

PUBLISHED FOR THE BENEFIT OF A CHARITABLE INSTITUTION.

Jesus amor meus est, si rideat, omnia rident.
O Death, where is thy sting? 1 Cor. xv. 55.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1785.]

PREFACE.

When the following narrative was drawn up, the writer was aware that his feelings rendered him incompetent to judge how much of a relation, every part of which was interesting to himself, might be fit to offer to the public. Many little circumstances which the indulgence of a friend could bear with, might, to strangers, appear trivial and impertinent. He therefore wrote only for his friends; and printed no more copies than he thought would be sufficient to distribute within the circle of his personal acquaintance. But as the paper has been much inquired after, and many of his friends have expressed their wish, that it might be more extensively circulated, he has at length yielded to their judgment.

It is to be lamented, that in this enlightened age, so signalized by the prevalence of a spirit of investigation, religion should, by many, be thought the only subject unworthy of a serious inquiry; and that while in every branch of science they studiously endeavour to trace every fact to its proper and adequate cause, and are cautious of admitting any theory which cannot stand the test of *experiment*, they treat the use of the term *experimental*, when applied to religion, with contempt. Yet there are many things connected with this subject, in which, whether we are willing or unwilling, we are, and must be, nearly interested. Death, for instance, is inevitable. And if there be an *hereafter*, (and it is impossible to prove that there is not,) the consequences of death must be important. Many persons die, as they live, thoughtless and careless what consequences may

await them. Others whose characters and conduct do not appear to have been worse than those of the former, cannot die so. They have dark and painful forebodings, and leave this world with reluctance and terror. And there are others, who, though conscious that they are sinners, and sure that they are about to enter upon an unchangeable and endless state of existence, possess peace, composure, and joy. These declare that they owe this happy state of mind to their dependence upon Jesus the Saviour, on whose blood and mediation they have built their hopes. And who can possibly disprove their words? Such an instance is now in the readers hands. The fact is indubitable. A child, under the age of fifteen, did thus rejoice in the midst of pains and agonies, to the admiration of all who beheld her. She was willing to leave all her friends whom she dearly loved, and by whom she was tenderly beloved; for she knew whom she believed, and that when she should be absent from the body, she would be present with the Lord. With this assurance, she triumphed in the prospect of glory, and smiled upon the approach of death.

It may be presumed, that whoever seriously considers this case, will not be able to satisfy himself, by ascribing such remarkable effects, in so young a subject, to the power of habit, example, or system. If he does not account for them upon the principles of the Gospel, he will be unable to assign any proportionable cause. And it is to be feared, that if he is not affected by a testimony so simple and so striking, neither would he be persuaded though one should rise from the dead.

Hoxton, Nov. 17, 1785.

A

MONUMENT

TO THE

PRAISE OF THE LORD'S GOODNESS,

AND TO THE

MEMORY OF DEAR ELIZA CUNINGHAM.*

As I write not for the eye of the public, but chiefly to put a testimony of the Lord's goodness into the hands of my dear friends who have kindly afforded us their sympathy and prayers on the late occasion; I do not mean either to restrain the emotions of my heart, or to apologize for them. I shall write simply and freely, as I might speak to a person, to whose intimacy and tenderness I can fully intrust myself, and who, I know, will bear with all my weaknesses.

In May, 1782, my sister Cuningham was at Edinburgh, chiefly on the account of her eldest daughter, then in the fourteenth year of her age, who was very ill of a consumption. She had already buried an only son, at the age of twelve; and while all a mother's care and feeling were engaged by the rapid decline of a second amiable child, she was unexpectedly and suddenly bereaved of an affectionate and excellent husband. Her trials were great, but the Lord had prepared her for them. She was a believer. Her faith was strong; her graces active; her conduct exemplary. She walked with God, and he supported her. And though she was a tender and sympathizing friend, she

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* The last surviving child of Mr. James Cuningham, of Pittarthie, Fifeshire.

had a happy firmness of temper; so that her character as a Christian, and the propriety of her behaviour in every branch of relative life, appeared with peculiar advantage in the season of affliction. She returned to Anstruther, a widow, with her sick child, who languished till October, and then died.

Though my sister had many valuable and pleasing connexions in Scotland, yet her strongest tie being broken, she readily accepted my invitation to come and live with us. She was not only dear to me as Mrs. Newton's sister, but we had lived long in the habits of intimate friendship. I knew her worth, and she was partial to me. She had yet one child remaining, her dear Eliza. We already had a dear orphan niece, whom we had, about seven years before, adopted for our own daughter. My active, fond imagination, anticipated the time of her arrival, and drew a pleasing picture of the addition the company of such a sister, such a friend, would make to the happiness of our family. The children likewise—there was no great disparity between them either in years or stature. From what I had heard of Eliza, I was prepared to love her before I saw her; though she came afterwards into my hands like a heap of untold gold, which, when counted over, proves to be a larger sum than was expected. My fancy paired and united these children; I hoped that the friendship between us and my sister would be perpetuated in them. I seemed to see them like twin sisters, of one heart and mind, habited nearly alike, always together, always with us. Such was my plan—but the Lord's plan was very different, and therefore mine failed. It is happy for us poor short-sighted creatures, unable as we are to foresee the consequences of our own wishes, that if we know and trust him, he

often is pleased to put a merciful negative upon our purposes; and condescends to choose better for us than we can for ourselves. What might have been the issue of my plan, could it have taken place, I know not; but I can now praise and adore him for the gracious issue of his. I praise his name, that I can cheerfully comply with his word, which says, "Be still, and know that I am God." I not only can bow (as it becomes a creature and a sinner to do) to his sovereignty; but I admire his wisdom and goodness, and can say, from my heart, "He has done all things well."

My sister had settled her affairs previous to her removal, and nothing remained but to take leave of her friends, of whom she had many, not only in Anstruther, but in different parts of the county. In February, 1783, I received a letter from her, which, before I opened it, I expected was to inform me that she was upon the road in her way to London. But the information was, that in a little journey she had made to bid a friend farewell, she had caught a violent cold, which brought on a fever and a cough, with other symptoms, which though she described as gently as possible, that we might not be alarmed, obliged me to give up instantly the pleasing hope of seeing her. Succeeding letters confirmed my apprehensions; her malady increased, and she was soon confined to her bed. Eliza was at school at Musselburgh. Till then she had enjoyed a perfect state of health; but while her dear mother was rapidly declining, she likewise caught a great cold, and her life likewise was soon thought to be in danger. On this occasion, that fortitude and resolution which so strongly marked my sister's character, was remarkably displayed. She knew that her own race was almost finished; she earnestly desired that Eliza might live or

die with us. And the physicians advised a speedy removal into the south. Accordingly, to save time, and to save Eliza from the impressions which the sight of a dying parent might probably make upon her spirits, and possibly apprehensive that the interview might make too great an impression upon her own; she sent this her only beloved child from Edinburgh directly to London, without letting her come home to take a last leave of her. She contented herself with committing and bequeathing her child to our care and love, in a letter, which I believe was the last she was able to write.

Thus powerfully recommended by the pathetic charge of a dying mother, the dearest friend we had upon earth, and by that plea for compassion which her illness might have strongly urged even upon strangers, we received our dear Eliza as a trust, and as a treasure, on the fifteenth of March. My sister lived long enough to have the comfort of knowing, not only that she was safely arrived, but was perfectly pleased with her new situation. She was now freed from all earthly cares. She suffered much in the remaining part of her illness, but she knew in whom she believed; she possessed a peace past understanding, and a hope full of glory. She entered into the joy of her Lord on the tenth of May, 1783, respected and regretted by all who knew her.

I soon perceived that the Lord had sent me a treasure indeed. Eliza's person was agreeable. There was an ease and elegance in her whole address, and a gracefulness in her movements, till long illness and great weakness bowed her down. Her disposition was lively, her genius quick and inventive, and if she had enjoyed health, she probably would have excelled in every thing she attempted that required ingenuity. Her

understanding, particularly her judgment, and her sense of propriety, was far above her years. There was something in her appearance which usually procured her favour at first sight. She was honoured by the notice of several persons of distinction, which, though I thankfully attribute in part to their kindness to me, I believe was a good deal owing to something rather uncommon in her. But her principal endearing qualities, which could be only fully known to us who lived with her, were the sweetness of her temper, and a heart formed for the exercise of affection, gratitude, and friendship. Whether, when at school, she might have heard sorrowful tales from children, who, having lost their parents, met with a great difference, in point of tenderness, when they came under the direction of uncles and aunts, and might think that all uncles and aunts were alike, I know not; but I have understood since, from herself, that she did not come to us with any highly raised expectations of the treatment she was to meet with. But as she found, (the Lord in mercy to her and to us having opened our hearts to receive her,) that it was hardly possible for her own parents to have treated her more tenderly, and that it was from that time the business and the pleasure of our lives, to study how to oblige her, and how to alleviate the afflictions which we were unable to remove; so we likewise found, that the seeds of our kindness could hardly be sown in a more promising and fruitful soil. I know not that either her aunt or I ever saw a cloud upon her countenance during the time she was with us. It is true, we did not, we could not, unnecessarily cross her; but if we thought it expedient to over-rule any proposal she made, she acquiesced with a sweet smile: and we were certain that we should never hear of that proposal again.

Her delicacy, however, was quicker than our observation; and she would sometimes say, when we could not perceive the least reason for it, "I am afraid I answered you peevishly; indeed I did not intend it; if I did, I ask your pardon. I should be very ungrateful, if I thought any pleasure equal to that of endeavouring to please you." It is no wonder that we dearly loved such a child.

Wonderful is the frame of the human heart. The Lord claims and deserves it all; yet there is still room for all the charities of relative life, and scope for their full play; and they are capable of yielding the sincerest pleasures this world can afford, if held in subordination to what is supremely due to him. The marriage relation, when cemented by a divine blessing, is truly a union of hearts, and the love resulting from it will admit of no competition in the same kind. Children have the next claim; and whether there be one, or two, or many, each one seems to be the object of the whole of the parent's love. Perhaps my friends who have children, may think that I, who never had any, can only talk by guess upon this subject. I presume not to dispute the point with them. But when it pleased the Lord to put my dear Betsey under my care, I seemed to acquire a new set of feelings, if not exactly those of a parent, yet, as I conceive, not altogether unlike them. And I long thought it was not possible for me to love any child as I did her. But when Eliza came, she, without being her rival, quickly participated with her in the same affection. I found I had room enough for them both, without prejudice to either. I loved the one very dearly, and the other no less than before; if it were possible, still more, when I saw that she entered into my views, received and behaved to her cousin with

great affection, and ascribed many little indulgences and attentions which were shown her, to their proper ground, the consideration of her ill state of health, and not to any preference that could operate to her disadvantage. For the Lord was pleased to answer my prayers in this respect so graciously, that I could not perceive that any jealousy or suspicion took place between them, on either side, from first to last.

The hectic fever, cough, and sweats, which Eliza brought with her from Scotland, were subdued in the course of the summer, and there appeared no reason to apprehend that she would be taken off very suddenly. But still there was a worm preying upon the root of this pretty gourd. She had seldom any severe pain, till within the last fortnight of her life, and usually slept well; but when awake she was always ill. I believe she knew not a single hour of perfect ease; and they who intimately knew her state, could not but wonder to see her so placid, cheerful, and attentive, when in company, as she generally was. Many a time, when the tears have silently stolen down her cheeks, if she saw that her aunt or I observed her, she would wipe them away, come to us, with a smile and a kiss, and say, "Do not be uneasy, I am not very ill, I can bear it, I shall be better presently," or to that effect.

Her case was thought beyond the reach of medicine, and, for a time, no medicine was used. She had air and exercise, as the weather and circumstances would permit. For the rest, she amused herself as well as she could with her guitar or harpsichord, with her needle, and with reading. She had a part likewise, when able, in such visits as we paid or received; and our visits were generally regulated by a regard to what she could bear. Her aunt, especially, seldom went

abroad but at such times, and to such places, as we thought agreeable and convenient to her. For we could perceive that she loved home best, and best of all when we were at home with her.

In April, 1784, we put her under the care of my dear friend Dr. Benamor. To the blessing of the Lord on his skill and endeavours, I ascribe the pleasure of having her continued with us so long; nor can I sufficiently express my gratitude for his assiduous, unwearied attention, nor for his great tenderness. She is now gone, and can no more repeat what she has often spoken, of the great comfort it was to her to have so affectionate and sympathizing a physician; but while I live, I hope it will always be my pleasure to acknowledge our great obligations to him, on her account. I should be ungrateful, likewise, were I to omit mentioning the kindness of Dr. Allen of Dulwich, who attended her daily during her last stay at Southampton. He was so obliging, likewise, as to visit her, and to meet Dr. Benamor upon her case, after her return to London. Their joint prescription was carefully followed. But what can the most efficacious medicines, or the best physicians, avail to prolong life, when the hour approaches in which the prayer of the great Intercessor must be accomplished, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, to behold my glory." This was the proper cause of my dear Eliza's death. The Lord sent this child to me to be brought up for him; he owned my poor endeavours; and when her education was completed, and she was ripened for heaven, he took her home to himself. He has richly paid me my wages, in the employment itself, and in the happy issue.

Dr. Benamor advising a trial of the salt water, we

passed the month of August, 1784, with her, partly at Mr. Walter Taylor's, at Southampton, and partly at Charles Etty's, Esq. of Priestlands, near Lymington. While she was with these kind and generous friends, she had every accommodation and assistance that could be thought of, or wished for. And the bathing was evidently useful, so far as to give some additional strength to her very weak and relaxed frame, which assisted her in going more comfortably through the last winter. We were, therefore, encouraged and advised to repeat our visit to Southampton this autumn. But the success was not the same. Her feet and legs had already begun to swell, and the evening before she set out she took cold, which brought on a return of the fever and cough; and though Dr. Allen was successful in removing these symptoms in about a fortnight, and she bathed a few times, she could not persevere. However, the advantages of situation, air, and exercise, being much greater than she could have in London, and as we were with friends whom she, as well as we, dearly loved, she continued at Southampton six weeks; but she was unable to proceed to Mr. Etty's, who was very desirous of repeating his former kindness. The Lord strengthened her to perform her journey home without inconvenience. She returned the sixteenth of September; then she entered our door for the last time, for she went out no more, till she was carried out to be put in the hearse.

I have thus put together, in one view, a brief account of what relates to her illness, till within the last three weeks of her pilgrimage. I now come to what is much more important and interesting. Her excellent parents had conscientiously endeavoured to bring her up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and

the principles of religion had been instilled into her from her infancy. Their labours was thus far attended with success, that no child could be more obedient or obliging, or more remote from evil habits or evil tempers; but I could not perceive, when she came to us, that she had any heart affecting sense of divine things. But, being under my roof, she of course, when her health would permit, attended on my ministry, and was usually present when I prayed and expounded the Scripture, morning and evening, in the family. Friends and ministers were likewise frequently with us, whose character and conversation were well suited to engage her notice. and to help her to form a right idea of the Christian principles and temper. Knowing that she was of a thinking turn, I left her to make her own reflections upon what she saw and heard, committing her to the Lord, from whom I had received her, and entreating him to be her effectual teacher. When I did attempt to talk with her, upon the concerns of her soul, she could give me no answer but with tears. But I soon had great encouragement to hope that the Lord had both enlightened her understanding, and had drawn the desires of her heart to himself. Great was her delight in the ordinances; exemplary her attention under the preaching. To be debarred from going to hear at our stated times, was a trial which, though she patiently bore, seemed to affect her more than any other; and she did not greatly care what she endured in the rest of the week, provided she was well enough to attend the public worship. The judicious observations she occasionally made upon what had passed in conversation, upon incidents, books, and sermons, indicated a sound Scriptural judgment, and a spiritual taste. And my hope was confirmed by her whole deportment,

which was becoming the Gospel of Christ. So that had she died suddenly, on any day within a year and a half past, I should have had no doubt that she had passed from death unto life. But I could seldom prevail with her to speak of herself; if she did, it was with the greatest diffidence and caution.

Soon after her return from Southampton she became acquainted with acute pain, to which she had till then been much a stranger. Her gentle spirit, which had borne up under a long and languishing illness, was not so capable of supporting pain. It did not occasion any improper temper or language, but it wore her away apace. Friday, the 30th of September, she was down stairs, for the last time, and then she was brought down, and carried up, in arms.

It now became very desirable to hear from herself a more explicit account of the hope that was in her; especially as upon some symptoms of an approaching mortification, she appeared to be a little alarmed, and, of course, not thoroughly reconciled to the thoughts of death. Her aunt waited for the first convenient opportunity of intimating to her the probability that the time of her departure was at hand. The next morning (Saturday, the first of October) presented one. She found herself remarkably better; her pains were almost gone, her spirits revived; the favourable change was visible in her countenance. Her aunt began to break the subject to her, by saying, "My dear, were you not extremely ill last night?" She said, "Indeed I was." "Had you not been relieved, I think you could not have continued long." "I believe I could not." "My dear, I have been very anxiously concerned for your life." "But I hope, my dear aunt, you are not so

now." She then opened her mind and spoke freely. I cannot repeat the whole; the substance was to this effect: "My views of things have been for some time very different from what they were when I came to you. I have seen and felt the vanity of childhood and youth." Her aunt said, "I believe you have long made a conscience of secret prayer." She answered, "Yes, I have long and earnestly sought the Lord with reference to the change which is now approaching. I have not yet that full assurance which is so desirable; but I have a hope, I trust, a good hope; and I believe the Lord will give me whatever he sees necessary for me before he takes me from hence. I have prayed to him to fit me for himself; and then, whether sooner or later, it signifies but little." Here was a comfortable point gained. We were satisfied that she had given up all expectation of living, and could speak of her departure without being distressed.

It will not be expected that a child at her age should speak systematically. Nor had she learnt her religion from a system or form of words, however sound. The Lord himself was her teacher. But, from what little she had at different times said to me, I was well satisfied that she had received a true conviction of the evil of sin, and of her own state by nature as a sinner. When she spoke of the Lord, she meant the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd, who gathers such lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom. She believed him to be God and man in one person, and that hope, of which she shall never be ashamed, was founded on his atonement, grace, and power. As I do not intend to put words into her mouth which she never

spoke, I mention this lest any persons should be disappointed at not finding a certain phraseology which they may have been accustomed to.

Her apparent revival was of short duration. In the evening of the same day she began to complain of a sore throat, which became worse, and, before Sunday noon, threatened an absolute suffocation. When Dr. Benamor, who the day before had almost entertained hopes of her recovery, found her so suddenly and greatly altered, he could not, at the moment, prevent some signs of his concern from appearing in his countenance. She quickly perceived it, and desired he would plainly tell her his sentiments. When he had recovered himself, he said, "you are not so well as when I saw you on Saturday." She answered, that she trusted all would be well soon. He replied, that whether she lived or died, it would be well, and to the glory of God. He told me that he had much pleasing conversation with her that morning; some particulars of which he had committed to writing, but he lost the paper. From that time she may be said to have been dying, as we expected her departure from one hour to another.

On Monday, the third, she was almost free from any complaint in her throat; but there was again an appearance of a mortification in her legs, which was again repelled by the means which Dr. Benamor prescribed. I recollect but little of the incidents of this day. In general she was in great pain, sometimes in agonies, unable to remain many minutes in the same position. But her mind was peaceful; she possessed a spirit of recollection and prayer; and her chief attention to earthly things seemed confined to the concern she saw in those who were around her. That she might not increase their feelings for her, she strove to conceal

the sense of her own sufferings. It pleased the Lord wonderfully to support my dear Mrs. Newton, and she had a tolerable night's rest, though I did not expect the child would live till morning. On Tuesday, the fourth, about nine in the morning, we all thought her dying, and waited near two hours by her bed side for her last breath. She was much convulsed, and in great agonies. I said, "My dear, you are going to heaven, and I hope, by the grace of God, we, in due time, shall follow you." She could not speak, but let us know that she attended to what I said by a gentle nod of her head, and a sweet smile. I repeated to her many passages of Scripture, and verses of hymns, to each of which she made the same kind of answer. Though silent, her looks were more expressive than words. Towards eleven o'clock, a great quantity of coagulated phlegm, which she had not strength to bring up, made her rattle violently in the throat, which we considered as a sign that death was at hand; and as she seemed unwilling to take something that was offered to her, we were loath to disturb her in her last moments, (as we supposed,) by pressing her. I think she must have died in a quarter of an hour, had not Dr. Benamor just then come into the room. He felt her pulse, and observed, that she was not near death by her pulse, and desired something might be given her. She was perfectly sensible, though still unable to speak, but expressed her unwillingness to take any thing by very strong efforts. However, she yielded to entreaty, and a tea-spoonful or two of some liquor soon cleared the passage, and she revived. Her pain, however, was extreme, and her disappointment great. I never saw her so near impatience as upon this occasion. As soon as she could speak, she cried, "Oh cruel, cruel, to recall

me when I was so happy and so near gone! I wish you had not come, I long to go home." But in a few minutes she grew composed, assented to what the doctor said of her duty to wait the Lord's time; and from that hour, though her desires to depart and to be with her Saviour, were stronger and stronger, she cheerfully took whatever was offered her, and frequently asked for something of her own accord.

How often, if we were to have our choice, should we counteract our own prayers! I had entreated the Lord to prolong her life, till she could leave an indisputable testimony behind her, for our comfort; yet, when I saw her agony, and heard her say, "Oh, how cruel to stop me!" I was, for a moment, almost of her mind, and could hardly help wishing that the doctor had delayed his visit a little longer. But if she had died then, we should have been deprived of what we saw and heard the two following days, the remembrance of which is now much more precious to me than silver or gold.

When the doctor came on Wednesday, she entreated him to tell her how long he thought she might live. He said, "are you in earnest, my dear?" She answered, "Indeed I am." At that time there were great appearances that a mortification was actually begun. He therefore told her he thought it possible she might hold out till eight in the evening, but did not expect she could survive midnight at furthest. On hearing him say so, low as she was, her eyes seemed to sparkle with their former vivacity, and fixing them on him with an air of ineffable satisfaction, she said, "Oh, that is good news indeed." And she repeated it as such to a person who came after into the room, and said, with lively emotions of joy, "The doctor tells

me I shall stay here but a few hours more." In the afternoon she noticed and counted the clock, I believe, every time it struck; and when it struck seven, she said, "Another hour, and then." But it pleased the Lord to spare her to us another day.

She suffered much in the course of Wednesday night, but was quite resigned and patient. Our kind servants, who, from their love to her and to us, watched her night and day with a solicitude and tenderness which wealth is too poor to purchase, were the only witnesses of the affectionate and grateful manner in which she repeatedly thanked them for their services and attention to her. Though such an acknowledgment was no more than their due, yet coming from herself, and at such a time, they highly valued it. She added her earnest prayers, that the Lord would reward them. To her prayers my heart says, Amen. May they be comforted of the Lord in their dying hours as she was, and meet with equal kindness from those about them!

I was surprised on Thursday morning to find her not only alive, but, in some respects, better. The tokens of mortification again disappeared. This was her last day, and it was a memorable day to us. When Dr. Benamor asked how she was, she answered, "Truly happy; and if this be dying, it is a pleasant thing to die;" [the very expression which a dear friend of mine used upon her death-bed a few years ago.] She said to me about ten o'clock, "My dear uncle, I would not change conditions with any person upon earth. Oh, how gracious is the Lord to me! Oh, what a change is before me!" She was several times asked, if she could wish to live, provided the Lord should restore her to perfect health? Her answer was, "Not

for all the world," and sometimes, "Not for a thousand worlds.* Do not weep for me, my dear aunt; but rather rejoice and praise on my account. I shall now have the advantage of dear Miss Patty Barham," (for whom she had a very tender affection, and who has been long in a languishing state,) "for I shall go before her." We asked her if she would choose a text for her own funeral sermon? She readily mentioned, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." "That," said she, "has been my experience; my afflictions have been many, but not too many; nor has the greatest of them been too great; I praise him for them all." But, after a pause, she said, "Stay, I think there is another text which may do better; let it be, 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.' That is my experience now." She likewise chose a hymn to be sung after the sermon. Olney Hymns, Book ii. Hymn 72.

But I must check myself, and set down but a small part of the gracious words which the Lord enabled her to speak in the course of the day, though she was frequently interrupted by pains and agonies. She had something to say, either in the way of admonition or consolation, as she thought most suitable, to every one whom she saw. To her most constant attendant she said, "Be sure you continue to call upon the Lord; and if you think he does not hear you now, he will at last, as he has heard me." She spoke a great deal to an intimate friend, who was with her every day, which I hope she will long remember, as the testimony of her dying Eliza. Amongst other things, she said, "See

* The last time she was asked this question, she said, (as I have been since informed,) "I desire to have no choice."

how comfortable the Lord can make a dying bed! Do you think that you shall have such an assurance when you come to die? Being answered, "I hope so, my dear," she replied, "But do you earnestly, and with all your heart, pray to the Lord for it? If you seek him, you shall surely find him." She then prayed affectionately and fervently for her friend, afterwards for her cousin, and then for another of our family who was present. Her prayer was not long, but her every word was weighty, and her manner very affecting; the purport was, that they might all be taught and comforted by the Lord. About five in the afternoon she desired me to pray with her once more. Surely I then prayed from my heart. When I had finished, she said, Amen. I said, "My dear child, have I expressed your meaning?" She answered, "Oh, yes!" and then added, "I am ready to say, Why are his chariot wheels so long in coming? But I hope he will enable me to wait his hour with patience." These were the last words I heard her speak.

Mrs. Newton's heart was much, perhaps too much, attached to this dear child; which is not to be wondered at, considering what a child she was, and how long and how much she had suffered. But the Lord graciously supported her in this trying season. Indeed, there was much more cause for joy than for grief; yet the pain of separation will be felt. Eliza well knew her feelings; and a concern for her was, I believe, the last anxiety that remained with her. She said to those about her, "Try to persuade my aunt to leave the room; I think I shall soon go to sleep, I shall not remain with you till the morning." Her aunt, however, was the last person who heard her speak, and was

sitting by her bed when she went away. A little past six, hearing that a relation, who dearly loved her, and was beloved by her, and who had come daily from Westminster to see her, was below stairs, she said, "Raise me up, that I may speak to him once more." Her aunt said, "My dear, you are nearly exhausted, I think you had better not attempt it." She smiled, and said, "It is very well, I will not." She was then within half an hour of her translation to glory; but the love of her dear Lord had so filled her with benevolence, that she was ready to exert herself to her last breath, in hopes of saying something that might be useful to others after she was gone.

Towards seven o'clock, I was walking in the garden, and earnestly engaged in prayer for her, when a servant came to me, and said, 'she is gone.' O Lord, how great is thy power! how great is thy goodness! A few days before, had it been practicable and lawful, what would I not have given to procure her recovery! yet seldom in my life have I known a more heart-felt joy, than when these words, *She is gone*, sounded in my ears. I ran up stairs, and our whole little family were soon around her bed. Though her aunt and another person were sitting with their eyes fixed upon her, she was gone, perhaps a few minutes before she was missed. She lay upon her left side, with her cheek gently reclining upon her hand, as if in a sweet sleep. And I thought there was a smile on her countenance. Never, surely, did death appear in a more beautiful, inviting form! We fell upon our knees, and I returned (I think I may say) my most unfeigned thanks to our God and Saviour, for his abundant goodness to her, crowned in this last instance, by giving her so gentle a dismission. Yes, I am satisfied. I am comforted. And if

one of the many involuntary tears I have shed could have recalled her to life, to health, to an assemblage of all that this world could contribute to her happiness, I would have laboured hard to suppress it. Now my largest desires for her are accomplished. The days of her mourning are ended. She is landed on that peaceful shore, where the storms of trouble never blow. She is, for ever, out of the reach of sorrow, sin, temptation, and snares. Now she is before the throne! She sees Him, whom not having seen, she loved; she drinks of the rivers of pleasure, which are at his right hand, and shall thirst no more.

She was born at St. Margaret's, Rochester, February 6, 1771.

Her parents settled at Anstruther, in Fife, in 1773.

She returned to us,—— March 15, 1783.

She breathed her spirit into her Redeemer's hands a little before seven in the evening, on October 6, 1785, aged fourteen years and eight months.

I shall be glad if this little narrative may prove an encouragement to my friends who have children. May we not conceive the Lord saying to us, as Pharaoh's daughter said to the mother of Moses, "Take this child and bring it up for me, and I will pay thee thy wages?" How solemn the trust! how important and difficult the discharge of it! but how rich the reward, if our endeavours are crowned with success! And we have every thing to hope from his power and goodness, if, in dependence upon his blessing, we can fully and diligently aim at fulfilling his will. Happy they, who will say at the last day, "Behold, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me."

The children of my friends will likewise see my narrative. May it convince them that it is practicable

and good to seek the Lord betimes! My dear Eliza's state of languor prevented her from associating with young people of her own age, so frequently and freely as she might otherwise have done. But these papers will come into the hands of some such, whom she knew, and whom she loved. To them I particularly commend and dedicate this relation. Oh! my dear young friends, had you seen with what dignity of spirit she filled up the last scene of her life, you must have been affected by it! Let not the liveliness of your spirits, and the gayety of the prospect around you, prevent you from considering, that to you likewise days will certainly come, (unless you are suddenly snatched out of life,) when you will say and feel that the world, and all in it, can afford you no pleasure. But there is a Saviour, and a mighty One, always near, always gracious to those who seek him. May you, like her, be enabled to choose him, as the Guide of your youth, and the Lord of your hearts. Then, like her, you will find support and comfort under affliction, wisdom to direct your conduct, a good hope in death, and by death a happy translation to everlasting life.

I have only to add my prayer, that a blessing from on high may descend upon the persons and families of all my friends, and upon all into whose hands this paper may providentially come.

JOHN NEWTON.

Charles' Square, Hoxton, Oct. 13, 1785,

THE

SUBJECT AND TEMPER OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY:

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

On Sunday, December 19, 1779.

THE DAY OF HIS FIRST PUBLIC SERVICE IN THAT CHURCH,

BY

JOHN NEWTON, RECTOR.

Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.—1 Thess. ii. 8.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1780.]

TO THE INHABITANTS

OF THE PARISHES OF

ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH,

This Sermon is respectfully dedicated and presented,

By their affectionate Servant

In the Gospel,

JOHN NEWTON.

THE SUBJECT AND TEMPER OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

EPHESIANS, iv. 15.

—Speaking the truth in love.—

THE words in the original have a more comprehensive sense than in our version, Αληθευοντες ευ αγαπη. They extend no less to conduct than to speech; and comprise, in one short sentence, that combination of integrity and benevolence which constitute the character of a true Christian. But, as our morning service has been already much prolonged, I mean not to enlarge at present upon this important subject. I propose my text rather as a kind of motto, to introduce a brief account of the feelings, desires, and purposes of my heart, on this my first appearance before you. The inhabitants of these parishes, to whom I more immediately address myself, have a right to be informed, now the providence of God has placed me in this city, and in this church, of the views with which I have undertaken the important trust lately committed to me, and of the manner and spirit in which it is my desire to discharge it. If these inquiries be upon any of your minds, accept my answer in the words I have read; I came, and, by the grace of God, I hope to abide amongst you, "speaking the truth in love."

I should be utterly unworthy your attention, I should deserve your contempt and detestation, if, under the solemn character of a minister of Jesus Christ, and with a professed regard for his service and the good of

souls, I should presume to speak any thing amongst you, but what I verily believe in my conscience to be the truth. The apostles were ambassadors for Christ,* and we, however inferior in other respects, are so far concerned in this part of their character, as to be equally bound to conform to the instructions of our Lord and Master. The Bible is the grand repository of the truths which it will be the business and the pleasure of my life to set before you. It is the complete system of divine truth, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken,† with impunity. Every attempt to disguise or soften any branch of this truth, in order to accommodate it to the prevailing taste around us, either to avoid the displeasure, or to court the favour, of our fellow-mortals, must be an affront to the majesty of God, and an act of treachery to men. My conscience bears me witness, that I mean to speak the truth among you. May the grace of God enable me always to do it. The principal branches of "the truth as it is in Jesus," according to St. Paul's expression, are summarily contained in the Articles, which I have just now read and given my solemn assent to in your hearing. These I acknowledge and adopt as a standard of sound doctrine, not merely because they are the Articles of our church, but because, upon mature and repeated examination, I am persuaded they are agreeable to the Scripture. I am to enlarge on the declarations of the Scripture and of the Articles concerning the depravity of fallen man, the evil of sin, the method of salvation by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I am to bear testimony to the dignity and excellency of the Redeemer's person and characters,

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* 2 Cor. v. 20. † Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

the suitableness of his offices, the efficacy of his blood, and obedience to death on the behalf of sinners, and his glory as Head of the church, and Lord of heaven and earth. I am to set before you the characters, obligations, and privileges of those who believe in his name; and to prove that the doctrines of the grace of God are doctrines according to godliness, which, though they may be abused by men of corrupt minds, have in themselves, when rightly understood, a direct and powerful tendency to enforce universal obedience to the commands of God, and to promote the peace and welfare of civil society. I am likewise to warn all who hear me, of the sin and danger of rejecting the great salvation revealed by the Gospel. These will be the subjects of my ministry; and, if what I shall offer upon these heads be agreeable not only to the Articles which I have subscribed, but to the Scriptures, which we all profess to believe, it must of course be admitted that I shall speak the truth.

But the cause of truth itself may be discredited by improper management; and, therefore, the Scripture, which furnishes us with subject matter for our ministry, and teaches us what we are to say, is equally explicit as to the temper and spirit in which we are to speak. Though I had the knowledge of all mysteries,* and the tongue of an angel to declare them, I could hope for little acceptance or usefulness, unless I was to speak "in love." The Gospel is a declaration of the astonishing love of God to mankind; it exhibits the perfect exemplar of love in the character of Him who, when upon earth in the form of a servant, "went about doing good,"† and exerted the most unbounded be-

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* 1 Cor. † Acts, x. 38.

nevolence to all around him. The servant of the Lord, of that meek and merciful Saviour, who wept over his avowed enemies, and prayed for his actual murderers while nailing him to the cross, learns at his Saviour's feet to bear a cordial love to all mankind. Man, considered as the creature of God, is the noblest and most important of his works in the visible creation, formed by him who originally made him for himself, with such a vastness of desire, such a capacity for happiness, as nothing less than an infinite good can satisfy; formed to exist in an eternal, unchangeable state. And even fallen man, though depraved and perverted, guilty, and, in his present state, obnoxious to eternal misery, is yet capable of being restored to the favour of God, and renewed into his image, of serving him here, and being happy with him for ever. Whoever, therefore, has tasted of the love of Christ, and has known by his own experience the need and the worth of redemption, is enabled, yea, he is constrained, to love his fellow-creatures. He loves them at first sight; and, if the providence of God commits a dispensation of the Gospel and a care of souls to him, he will feel the warmest emotions of friendship and tenderness, while he beseeches them by the tender mercies of God,* and even while he warns them by his terrors.† Surely I durst not address you from this place, if I could not, with sincerity at least, if not with equal warmth, adopt the apostle's words, and say, "Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to impart unto you not the Gospel of God only, but our own souls also, (were it possible,) because ye were dear unto us."‡

This love which my heart bears, I offer as a plea

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* Rom. xii. 1. † 2 Cor. v. 11. ‡ 1 Thess. ii. 8.

for that earnestness and importunity which I must use. I came not to amuse you with subjects of opinion or uncertainty, or even with truths of a cold, speculative, uninteresting nature, which you might receive without benefit, or reject without detriment; but to speak the *truths of God*, truths of the utmost importance to the welfare of your souls in time and in eternity. If I love you, therefore, I cannot be content with delivering my message; my spirit must and will be deeply engaged for its success. I cannot be content with the emoluments annexed to my office—I seek not yours, but you;* that you may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge;† that you may be delivered from the power of this evil world,‡ and that I and you may at length stand accepted before the throne of God; in a word, that by a blessing from on high, accompanying my poor labours, I may both save myself, and them that hear me.§ These are the aims and ends which I hope always to have in view; and, therefore, love will prompt me to be faithful and earnest.

Too often the due reception of the truth is greatly impeded by the cares, the businesses, or the amusements of the world. We find many of our hearers, alas! too happy, or too much engrossed, to afford us that attention we have a right to claim, considering the weight of our message, and the authority under which we speak. But God, in mercy to the souls of men, frequently suits the appointments of his providence, in subserviency to the purposes of his grace. He prepares for them, what they do not desire for themselves, seasons for leisure, retirement, and reflec-

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* 2 Cor. xii. 14.
† Eph. iii. 19.
‡ Gal. i. 4.
§ 1 Tim. iv. 16.

tion. This is one gracious design of the various afflictions of human life. When he visits with sickness or pain, crosses and disappointments—when our cisterns are broken, and our gourds wither—when the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke,* or we meet with a thorn or sting where our fond hearts were expecting only pleasure—then, perhaps, the truths which were heard with too much indifference in the hour of prosperity, may be more regarded. My love will prompt me to be always near you, waiting for such seasons, and ready upon the first intimation (for I mean not to intrude myself) to offer my sympathy, my prayers, my best advice. Though I shall have but little time for visits of mere ceremony, to visit you as a minister, and to assist you to the utmost of my power in making a right improvement of the providences of God, is a service which I shall always owe you from a principle of duty, and, which I hope always to be glad to render from a principle of love.

If the grace of God, without which I can do nothing, should thus enable me to speak the truth in love, may I not hope for your favourable attention? Would it not imply an unjust reflection upon your candour, to suppose that any of you will be angry with one who only wishes to speak the truth in love? Certainly I can as yet have no particular reason to expect an unkind return from any individual among you, because I am a stranger to you all. But the Scripture teaches what experience and observation abundantly confirm, that the doctrines of divine truth are so mysterious in themselves, and so opposite and mortifying to the opinion mortals are prone to entertain of their own

* Ezek. xxiv. 16.

wisdom and goodness, that persons of very amiable characters in common life, are too often amongst the warmest opposers of the ministers who dare faithfully and plainly persevere in speaking the truth. Should I have this trial to meet with from any of you, still I hope to speak the truth in love, and to remember that I am a follower of Him who only returned kindness for hard usage. I hope to consider, that if any oppose, it is because they know not what they do; and to bear in mind, that I myself was once a scorner and despiser of the Gospel which I now preach; that I stand here as a pattern of the long-suffering of God; and that having obtained mercy myself, I have encouragement, from my own case, to hope that the strongest prejudices may be softened by the power of his grace.

Let me close with one observation. The transactions of this day, and the consequences of it will not be soon forgotten. They will be registered in the annals of eternity. "As surely as we are now met together, so surely we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."* Then I must give an account of my ministry, and you of the manner in which you received it. If I speak the truth—it is at the peril of my hearers to treat it with contempt, or even with neglect. But I would hope better things, even that the Lord, the Holy Spirit, will prepare our hearts to receive with meekness that ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls.†

I only add my earnest request for a frequent and fervent remembrance in your prayers, that the Father of mercies, the God of all wisdom, may so influence my spirit, that no part of my conduct may be unsuita-

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* 2 Cor. v. 10. † James, i. 21.

ble to what I have at this time professed—that speaking the truth in love, and commending it by a conversation becoming the Gospel,* my labours and my life may be acceptable and serviceable among you. I trust that I, on my part, shall not cease to pray, that his blessing may rest upon you, upon your persons, your families, and upon all your concerns, and more especially for the welfare and comfort of your souls—that he may guide you by his counsel through this life,† and afterwards receive you to his glory!

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* Phil. i. 27. † Psalm lxxiii. 24.

THE

GUILT AND DANGER OF SUCH A NATION AS THIS:

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

On Wednesday, February, 21, 1781;

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL FAST.

The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy.—AMOS, iii. 8.

Humana sed mens nescia modum ponere
Rebus, secundis intumet successibus.
Quo plura hominibus contulit bonitas Dei,
Occæcat animos altior securitas,
Vanoque fastu turgidos superbia
Stimulat inanis. BUCHAN. Jepth.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1781.]

TO THE INHABITANTS

OF THE PARISHES OF

ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH,

This Sermon is respectfully addressed,

By their affectionate Servant

In the Gospel,

JOHN NEWTON.

THE GUILT AND DANGER OF SUCH A NATION AS THIS.

JEREMIAH, v. 29.

Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

THREE times* the Lord God repeats, by his prophet, this alarming question. Their ingratitude and obstinacy were so notorious, their sins so enormous, and aggravated, the sentence denounced against them, however severe, was so undeniably just, that, partial as they were to themselves, God is pleased to appeal to their own consciences, and to make them judges in their own cause; inviting, or rather challenging them, to offer any plea why his forbearance and patience, which they had so long despised, should be still afforded them.

But the form of the question will not permit us to confine the application to Israel or Judah. The words are not, *On this nation* particularly, but "On such a nation as this." The Lord, the Governor of the earth, has provided, in the history of one nation, a lesson of instruction and warning to every nation under the sun; and the nearer the state and spirit of any people resemble the state and character of Judah, when Jeremiah prophesied among them, the more reason they have to tremble under the apprehension of the same or similar judgments.

God brought Israel out of Egypt with an outstretch-

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* Jer. v. 9. ix. 9.

ed arm, divided the Red Sea before them, led them in the wilderness by a cloud and pillar of fire, fed them with manna, and gave them water from the rock. He planted them in a good land; and, though they often sinned, and were often punished, they were distinguished by many tokens of his presence, and effects of his goodness, above any other nation. In the time of Solomon, they possessed the height of human prosperity; but they soon rebelled, and involved themselves in increasing troubles. And though the efforts and examples of Hezekiah and Josiah produced a temporary reformation, and procured a temporary respite, they went on, upon the whole, from bad to worse, till the measure of their iniquity being filled up, and the season of God's long-suffering at an end, he directed the march of Nebuchadnezzar against them, who, because he was the appointed instrument of divine vengeance, could not fail of success. The temple and city of Jerusalem were burnt, the land desolated, the greater part of the inhabitants destroyed, and the survivors led captives into a far distant land.

We likewise are a highly favoured people, and have long enjoyed privileges which excite the admiration and envy of surrounding nations; and we are a sinful, ungrateful people; so that when we compare the blessings and mercies we have received from the Lord, with our conduct towards him, it is to be feared we are no less concerned with the question in my text than Israel was of old. This is the point I purpose to illustrate, as suitable to the design for which we are at this time professedly assembled.

Though the occasion will require me to take some notice of our public affairs, I mean not to amuse you with what is usually called a political discourse. The

Bible is my system of politics. There I read, that the Lord reigns;* that he doth what he pleaseth in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth;† that no wisdom, understanding, counsel, or power, can prevail, without his blessing;‡ that as righteousness exalteth a nation, so sin is the reproach, and will even totally be the ruin of any people.§ From these and other maxims of a like report, I am learning to be still, and to know that he is God. My part, as a minister of the Gospel of peace, is not to inflame, but, if possible, to sooth and sweeten the spirits of my hearers; to withdraw their attention from the instrumental and apparent causes of the calamities we feel or fear, and to fix it upon sin, as the original and proper cause of every other evil. As a peaceful and a loyal subject, I profess and inculcate obedience to the laws of my country, to which I conceive myself bound by the authority of God's command, and by gratitude for the civil and religious liberty I possess. For the rest, political disquisitions, except immediately connected with Scriptural principles, appear to me improper for the pulpit at all times, and more especially unseasonable and indecent on a day of public humiliation. I hope we are now met, not to accuse others, but to confess our own sins; not to justify ourselves, but to plead for mercy.

May it please God, therefore, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, to impress the consciences of all present, and to make us attentive to our own immediate concerns, while I endeavour,

I. Briefly to delineate the state of the nation; or to show you what a nation this is.

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* Psalm xcvii. 1.
† Dan. iv. 35.
‡ Prov. xxi. 30.
§ Prov. xiv. 34.

II. To consider in what manner the righteous Judge and Governor of the earth might justly avenge himself of such a nation as this.

III. To inquire, Whether there be any hope that such a nation as this can yet escape the impending ruin with which it is threatened? and if there be, in what way this mercy is to be sought and expected?

I. In order to estimate the state of the nation, we must attend to two views, which, when contrasted, illustrate each other, and, in their combination, constitute our national character, and discriminate it not only from that of every nation around us, but from all the kingdoms recorded in the history of past ages. I mean our national privileges, and our national sins.

With regard to the first head, the peculiar privileges which, by the favour of Divine Providence, we have enjoyed as a people, I must be brief. A full detail of them would require a volume. Though the island of Great Britain exhibits but a small spot upon a map of the globe, it makes a splendid appearance in the history of mankind, and has, for a long space of time, been signally under the protection of God, and the seat of peace, liberty, and truth. When Christendom had groaned for ages under the night of papal superstition, the first light of reformation dawned amongst us by the preaching and writings of Wickliffe. From that time we have possessed the knowledge of the Gospel, and God has had a succession of witnesses in our land; they have been, at different periods, exposed to suffering, and many of them were called to seal their testimony with their blood; but they could neither be intimidated nor extirpated. In Luther's time, when the pillars of Popery were more publicly and generally shaken, we were among the first who were animated

and enabled to shake off the yoke of Rome; and God has often since remarkably interposed to preserve us from being brought into that bondage a second time. The spirit of persecution under various forms, has again and again attempted to resume its power, but has been as often restrained and defeated. Civil commotions likewise stand upon record in our annals; and our forefathers have felt miseries of which we can form but a very imperfect idea. But they suffered and struggled for us. The event of every contest and revolution contributed gradually to establish that happy basis of government which we call the British Constitution; and, together with these advances in favour of liberty, an increase of commerce, wealth, and dominion, has been afforded us. From that distinguished æra, the Revolution, and more especially since the accession of the present royal family, we have enjoyed such an uninterrupted series of peace and prosperity, as cannot be paralleled in the history of any nation we have heard of, not excepting even that of Israel. I call our peace *uninterrupted:* for the efforts of rebellion in the reigns of our two last kings were so speedily crushed, and were productive of so few calamities, except to the unhappy aggressors, that they are chiefly to be noticed as instances of the goodness of the Lord, who, notwithstanding we were then a sinful people, was pleased to fight our battles, and put our enemies to shame. I call it *uninterrupted;* for though we have been engaged as principals in several foreign wars, and the storm fell with dreadful weight upon other countries, we at home knew little of the war but from the public prints, which usually, after the first or second year, were filled with accounts of the successes and victories which the Lord of hosts (alas! by how few was he

acknowledged) gave to our fleets and armies. When the last war terminated, we were at the height of national honour and power. Our arms were victorious, and our flags triumphant, wherever our operations had been directed, in the most distant and opposite parts of the globe. What an accession of empire and riches did we then acquire, while we were sitting, (if I may so speak) under our vines and fig-trees, undisturbed; and while a considerable part of Germany, rather involved, than properly interested in our disputes, was almost desolated by fire and sword! And, notwithstanding our increasing provocations, every succeeding year has afforded signal proofs that, though the Lord is displeased with us, he has not yet forsaken us. If, in some instances, he has justly disappointed our expectations, he has, in others, appeared no less remarkably in our favour; defeating the designs of our enemies, protecting our commerce, and affording us, in general, more plentiful harvests at home, since the war has rendered supplies from abroad more precarious and difficult. Add to our internal peace, wealth, and plenty, the inviolable immunity both of persons and property, in which we are preserved by the spirit and administration of our laws, and that unrestrained liberty which people of all sentiments and denominations possess and exercise, of worshipping God in the way they think most agreeable to his will. Must not a due consideration of these things constrain us to say, "He hath not dealt so with any nation?"

What could the Lord have done more for his vineyard?* How could he have laid a people under stronger obligations to his service? What returns might he not expect from such a nation as this? But, alas! we

* Isa. v. 4.

have requited him evil for good! Such a nation as this is very imperfectly described by an enumeration of privileges. I have a more painful task now to attend to; I should enumerate (were it possible) our national sins. It is but a sketch I can offer upon this immense and awful subject. But enough is obvious, and at hand, to make us tremble, if we regard the Scripture, and do, in our hearts, believe there is a God that governs the earth.* I wish you to keep in mind, as I proceed, the slight view I have given of the favours God has bestowed upon us. The recollection of his mercies is necessary to give a proper sense of the colouring and aggravation of our sins. It is often pleaded that, sinful as we are, we are not more depraved in morals and practice than the inhabitants of France or Italy, or the other nations of Europe. I much question the truth of this plea. I am afraid that, in some instances at least, we are more corrupt and profligate than any nation now existing. But, admitting that France or Italy equal, or even exceed us, in open and positive wickedness; if they fall short of us in advantages for knowing the will of God; if they are not equally enriched by the bounties of his providence; if he has not so signally appeared on their behalf as he has on ours, their sins, however enormous or numerous, are not attended with equal aggravations; we must fix upon a nation (if such could be found) that is upon a par with us in the blessings of Gospel light, of civil and religious liberty, before we can properly form a comparison, or have any just reason for supposing that our sins are not greater than theirs.

The magnitude of our national debt is a frequent topic of conversation. We have, indeed, but an in-

* Psalm lviii. 11.

distinct idea of a number not very far short of two hundred millions; yet we can form some conception of it. But our national debt of sin is beyond all the rules and powers of arithmetical computation. The holiness, authority, and goodness of God (which are infinite) afford the only proper measures by which to judge of the horrid evil of the sins committed against him.

The sin of a nation is properly the aggregate or sum-total of all the sins committed by every individual residing in that nation. But those may be emphatically called *national sins*, which, by their notoriety, frequency, or circumstances, contribute to mark the character or spirit of one nation as distinct from another. It is to be hoped that some species of sins amongst us are not yet become national. They are rather exotics, not perfectly familiarized to the soil, or prevalent in every part of the land. I shall confine myself to a few of the particulars which are more directly characteristic of this nation, and at this time.

1. The maxims and usage generally prevalent among a people, if contrary to the rule of God's word, are national sins. If customary, they are national; if inconsistent with the precepts of Scripture, they must be sinful. A wo is denounced against those who call evil good, and good evil:* but this dreadful abuse of language, sentiment, and conduct, can only be avoided by making the inspired writings the standard of our judgment. In a land, that bears the name of Christian, adultery is deemed gallantry; murder, in some cases, is a point of honour; avarice is prudence; profuseness wears the mask of generosity; and dissipation is considered an innocent amusement. On the other

* Isa. v. 20.

hand, meekness is accounted meanness of spirit, and grace is branded with the opprobrious names of melancholy and enthusiasm. Habituated, from our infancy, to the effects of these prepossessions, and more or less under their influence, very few of us are duly sensible how utterly repugnant the spirit and temper of the world around us is to the genius and spirit of the Christianity we profess. It would, I think, appear in a much more striking light to an intelligent and unbiassed observer, who, upon hearing that Great Britain was favoured with the knowledge of the true religion, should visit us from some very remote country, with a view of sharing in our advantage. If I could make the tour of the kingdom with such a stranger, and show him what is transacting in the busy and in the gay world, in city, court, and country; if I could describe to him the persons he would see at our theatres and public places, at Newmarket, at contested elections, and explain the motives and aims which bring them together; if I could introduce him into the families of the great, the reputed wise, and the wealthy; from these data, together with the ignorance and licentiousness of the populace, which must unavoidably engage his notice wherever he went, I apprehend he would not be long at a loss to form a tolerable judgment of our national character. And if, after this survey, he were attentively to read the New Testament, I think he must allow that, admitting it was a revelation from God, our national character was neither more nor less than the union and combination of our national sins. He could not but perceive, that infidelity, pride, sensuality, greediness of gain, strangely coupled with thoughtless profusion, contempt of God, and a daring

opposition to his will, constitute the leading features of our portrait as a nation.

2. If there be sins which, though not expressly enjoined, are authorized, and, to people who regard man more than God, rendered in a manner necessary by the sanction of legislature, these, and especially in a free country, may be deemed national sins. Here I feel myself embarrassed. As a private member of society, full of respect and reverence for the authority to which, by the providence and will of God, I owe a willing and thankful subjection, I could wish to be entirely silent. But I likewise bear another character. As a minister of the Gospel, I stand here before a higher Master. In his service I am commanded to be bold and faithful; and I dare not, in conscience, especially at such a time, and on such an occasion as this, wholly suppress my sentiments. But I wish to speak with all the tenderness and delicacy the subject will admit.

In this land of liberty, the measures of government and of parliament, are canvassed with great freedom; often, indeed, with a very offensive intemperance and indecency. It is, however, one important privilege of our happy constitution, that British subjects have a right of presenting respectful petitions, either to the throne or to the senate, when such measures are in contemplation as are apprehended may prove detrimental to the interests of the nation or of individuals: a right which, upon the ground of real or pretended grievances, has been abundantly exercised of late years. But it is long since the honour of God and the interests of true religion have been the objects of an address or petition from any corporate body in the kingdom. This indifference of all parties to the cause of God, when all

are so attentive and feeling in cases where they think their own temporal concerns affected, warrants one to consider the acts of the legislature, while no alteration is desired by those on whom they are binding, as the acts of the whole nation. Even the edicts of an arbitrary prince, whose will supplies the place of law, might involve a nation in guilt, if he enjoined what was contrary to the commands of God, and they, through fear, obeyed him. Much more then may laws, made by the representatives of a free people, be considered as acts of the community, if they excite no constitutional endeavour for relief.

I am far from supposing that any of our laws now in force were formed with an intention of promoting sin. But some of them, through the prevailing depravation of morals amongst us, do it eventually. For instance, the Test and Corporation Acts, which require every person who has a post under government, or a commission in the navy or army, to qualify himself for his office by receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper, would occasion no sin, if men were generally influenced by the fear of God, or even by a principle of integrity. They would then rather decline places of honour or profit than accept them upon such terms, if they were conscious that their sentiments or conduct were repugnant to the design of that institution. But as the case stands at present, while gain is preferred to godliness, and the love of distinction or lucre is stronger than the dictates of conscience, we frequently see professed infidels and notorious libertines approach the Lord's table as a matter of course, and prostituting the most solemn ordinance of Christianity to their ambition or interest. The great number and variety of appointments, civil and military, which cannot be legally pos-

sessed without this qualification, render the enormity almost as common as it is heinous. If the Lord be a God of knowledge, he cannot be deceived. If he be a God of truth and holiness, he will not be mocked. I am afraid we have been long guilty of a contemptuous profanation of the body and blood of Christ.

The multiplicity of oaths, which are interwoven into almost every branch of public business, involves thousands in the habitual guilt of perjury, which, perhaps, may eminently be styled our national sin. Many of them, it is true, do not necessarily lead to sin, because honest and conscientious men may, and do, strictly observe them; but, it is to be feared, the greater number deliberately and customarily violate these solemn obligations, and take them as often as imposed without hesitation, and without any design of complying with them. Not a few of these oaths are either so worded or so circumstanced that it is morally impossible to fulfil them; and if a person was even to attempt it, he would be thought a busy body or a fool. Yet they must be tendered, and must be taken, as a matter of form, when nothing more is expected or purposed on either side. The number of churchwardens and constables, who are yearly sworn, is very great; and as these offices are chiefly held by rotation, in the course of a few years, they take in a considerable part of the middling people in the kingdom. How many or how few of them act up to the letter and the spirit of the oaths they have taken, will be known in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. But it is now evident, that while some, like sheep, tread without thought in the path of custom, content to forswear themselves because others have done so before them; and while some are hardy enough to trifle with God and man for

profit, the laws which enjoin and multiply oaths, do thereby furnish and multiply temptations to the sin of perjury. To this source we may ascribe much of that profligacy and contempt of religion which we now are called to mourn over. The frequency of oaths, the irreverent manner in which they are administered, and the impunity with which they are broken, have greatly contributed to weaken the sense of every moral obligation, and to spread a dissolute and daring spirit through the land.

Where the laws have expressly interposed to enforce the commands of God, if they are suffered by general consent to lie dormant, and are not carried into execution, the enormities which flow from such connivance come under the denomination of national sins. The profanation of the Lord's day, drunkenness, profane swearing, are contrary, not only to the precepts of Scripture, but to the laws of the land; and yet could hardly be more prevalent if there were no statutes in force against them. As these evils are not apparently detrimental to the revenue or to commerce, they are seldom taken notice of, except when connected with some act of trespass or injury to individuals. Very few magistrates are concerned to enforce the observation of these laws; and if private persons sometimes attempt it by information, they meet but little success, they obtain but little thanks. The arts of pleading, the minutiæ and niceties of forms, are employed to entangle and discourage them, and to screen offenders. Their endeavours are usually treated as officious and impertinent, and they are stigmatized with the invidious name of *informers*. In their own cause they are allowed to be active; but a man must have a good share of resolution, or rather of divine grace, who can withstand the re-

proach and scorn he will bring upon himself if he dare to be active in the cause of God.

My subject, alas! is almost boundless. But our time prescribes limits to my discourse. I must, however, hint my apprehension, that acts of oppression and violence, in some parts, at least, of our widely extended settlements, have contributed to enhance and aggravate our national sin. If the welfare and the lives of thousands have been sacrificed to the interest of the few; if the ravages of cruelty and avarice, though notorious and undeniable, have met with no public censure or punishment, may we not expect that God himself will avenge the oppressed, and plead their cause, not only against their actual oppressors, but against the community that refused to hear their cries and redress their wrongs?

I am pained, likewise, to observe how little the calamities of war and the shedding of blood are laid to heart. War, when most necessary and unavoidable, is a dreadful evil; one of the most severe scourges with which the great God visits a sinful world. But, because we, through his mercy, know no more of it at home than by what we hear of the sufferings of others; to their sufferings, if we account them enemies, the hearts of many are as unfeeling as a stone. They contemplate with composure and apparent satisfaction, not only the horrors of a field of battle, but the devastations, flames, rapes, and murders, which too often mark the progress of conquest, or the retreat of disappointed rage. May the Lord God keep such miseries far from us! May we never have to say, "As we have heard, so we have seen!" But there is a temper and spirit too prevalent amongst us, which calls for humiliation: a thirst of revenge, an eagerness for war, as affording opportunity

for pillage and plunder, and an indifference to the distresses of our fellow-creatures, more answerable to the idea we form of the savages in America, than to that of a civilized and Christian people.

If we consider the nation with a more particular respect to the profession of religion amongst us, the prospect is equally dark. Though the articles and liturgy, which are still retained as a public standard, express the doctrines and spirit of the Reformation, the truths upon which they are founded are sunk into disrepute. They are heard from few pulpits; they are to be met with in few books of modern divinity. The ministers who have courage to preach agreeably to their required subscriptions, are discountenanced and slighted, if not openly opposed. In a word, the Gospel of Christ, the truth as it is in Jesus, is little known amongst us, and, where it is published, it is rejected by a great majority of every rank. Yet, by the mercy of God, it has been considerably revived and spread amongst us of late years, and I hope is still spreading. There is a remnant amongst us who sigh and mourn for the abominations of the times, and have an humble and awful sense of the judgments of God declared against sin. They see black clouds gathering apace around us, and their hearts tremble at the apprehension of what he may justly inflict upon such a nation as this. But even among the people of different denominations who profess the truth, there is much to be lamented. Alas! what sinful conformity to the world! what coldness and indifference where we ought to be warm, and what unchristian heat and fierceness in enforcing and exploding lesser differences in sentiments or modes of worship! May we not fear lest, for the abatement of Christian love, the violence of party-spi-

rit, and the abuse of religious liberty, the Lord should visit his professing people with a rod, even though he were still to exercise patience towards the nation at large?

Let us, then, having premised this brief but awful delineation of our present state, proceed to consider,

II. What we have just reason to expect, if the Lord should speak to us in his displeasure, and avenge himself of such a nation as this. Two obvious topics offer themselves to assist our inquiries:

1. What we learn from Scripture, and from general history, of God's usual methods in the government of the world. He avenged himself on the old world by a deluge; on Sodom and Gomorrah, by fire from heaven. Where are now the mighty empires which once extended over a great part of the earth? The Assyrian Persian, Macedonian, and Roman governments, arose and perished in succession. What were Cyrus, Alexander, and other conquerors, whose victories decided the fate of nations, but instruments of divine vengeance? The sins of the people against whom they went, and a secret commission from the Lord of hosts, directed their march, and ensured their success. He has appointed a day when he will judge the world in righteousness, but the award of that final tribunal will be personal, to each one according to his works. Communities, as such, in their collective capacity, are visited and judged in the present life. And, in this respect, the Scripture considers nations as individuals; each having an infancy, growth, maturity, and declension. Every succeeding generation accumulates the stock of national sin, and there is a measure of iniquity which determines the period of kingdoms. Till this measure is filled up, the patience of God waits for them, but then patience gives way to vengeance.

Such has been his uniform procedure, from the earliest times of which either sacred or profane history affords us any information; and undoubtedly a day will come when the prosperity of this nation will cease. May it be at a yet very distant period! But there are alarming symptoms of decay already visible upon us. When God is exceedingly displeased with a people, it is not necessary in order to their punishment, that he should bury them alive by an earthquake, or destroy them by lightning. If he only leave them to themselves, withdraw his blessing from their counsels, and his restraint from their passions, their ruin follows of course, according to the necessary order and connexion of causes and effects. The destruction of Jerusalem affords a striking proof and illustration of this remark. Our Saviour foretold that the calamities of that siege would be greater and more aggravated than had ever been known from the creation; and infidels must confess that the relation of Josephus, who was an eye-witness of that catastrophe, exhibits such scenes of distress as cannot be paralleled in any other history. Yet the Roman armies, which were led on by an invisible hand to accomplish the prediction, were not headed by a Nero, or a Caligula, whose savage disposition and thirst of blood, might have prompted them to unrelenting slaughter; but by Titus, who, for his singular moderation and clemency, obtained the title of *Deliciæ humani generis*, the friend and delight of mankind. He desired not their destruction, he entreated them to have pity on themselves, but in vain; they were judicially infatuated, and devoted to ruin. If God gives up a people to the way of their own hearts, they will, they must, perish. When a general corruption of morals takes place; when private interest extinguishes all

sense of public virtue; when a profligate and venal spirit has infested every rank and order of the state; when presumptuous security and dissipation increase in proportion as danger approaches; when, after repeated disappointments, contempt of God, and vain confidence in imagined resources of their own grow bolder and stronger, then there is reason to fear that the sentence is already gone forth, and that the execution of it is at hand.

2. The progress of our public affairs for some years past, too evidently confirms these general principles, brings the application home to ourselves, and loudly warns us what we are yet to expect, if we persist in hardening ourselves against the Lord. How rapid the change we have seen! From what small beginnings to what extensive consequences! The cloud which now overspreads the heavens with blackness, was not long since no larger than a man's hand. I suppose none who were actively concerned in our public commotions, during their early stage, had the least apprehension that things would have proceeded to such calamitous and diffusive extremities. But sin abounded, and the Lord was displeased. Thus we may easily account for every mistake and miscarriage; for the first rise, and the long continuance of the war. The connexion between us and the Americans was too nearly founded in relation, too closely cemented by mutual interest, to be so suddenly broken, if their sins and ours had not concurred in operation to bring distress both upon them and us. After a great expense of treasure and blood, instead of the re-union we hoped for, we have been successively involved in war with France, Spain, and Holland. And it is possible that every power in Europe either is, or soon will be, openly or secretly against us. Nor

can I omit, upon this occasion, the unprecedented violence of the late dreadful hurricanes in the West Indies. Though infidels and petty reasoners will, doubtless, labour to persuade themselves that they proceeded merely from natural causes, Christians, I trust, will acknowledge the voice of God speaking, and speaking to us out of the whirlwind. It is true, he spoke by them to our enemies likewise, for they likewise are sinners. May both they and we be humbled before him, and learn, that as sin instigates and arms us to destroy each other, so when he is pleased to take the work into his own hands, he can strike such a blow as shall for the time suspend our feeble hostilities, and, by involving us in a common calamity, make us, notwithstanding our enmity, the objects of mutual commisseration. "The Lord's hand is lifted up."* This part of an ancient prophecy is fulfilled in our view; the next clause, "They will not see," is, alas! fulfilled likewise by the amazing insensibility and infatuation which still prevails among us. It follows, "But they shall see." What still greater evils may overtake us, before this clause also is accomplished to the glory of God and our due humiliation, who can say? Alas! who that loves his country, but must tremble at the prospects of the judgments yet impending over us, if he should still proceed to plead his own cause till he is fully avenged on "such a nation as this!" To relieve my thoughts, I gladly hasten to inquire,

III. Whether there be any hope that "such a nation as this" may yet escape deserved ruin? and if there be, in what way this mercy is to be sought and expected?

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* Isa. xxvi. 11.

I confess I have little hopes of it but upon one or the other of the following suppositions :

1. If the Lord be graciously pleased to succeed the professed design of this day's service, and to put forth that power which accompanied his message by Jonah to Nineveh, so that a general spirit of repentance and humiliation may spread throughout the land—if he bow the hearts of both rulers and people, to confess and forsake those sins which have awakened his displeasure—if the laws which concern his honour, will, and worship, be speedily and impartially enforced ; and profaneness and immorality discountenanced and suppressed—if, instead of trusting in fleets and armies, we acknowledge the Lord of hosts, and look up to him for a blessing—if men, " fearing God and hating covetousness,"* are raised up to assist in our councils, and to stand forth in their country's cause; men, who will rely on his guidance and protection, and disdain the little arts and intrigues on which alone short-sighted politicians depend for the success of their measures :—should I live to see such a happy internal change, I should hope that, notwithstanding our great provocations, the Lord, whose mercies are infinite, would be yet entreated for us; that he would turn from the fierceness of his anger, maintain our tranquillity at home, and, by his wisdom, and his influence over the hearts of men, put an honourable and satisfactory end to the unhappy war in which we are engaged.

2. However the bulk of the nation may determine, if the remnant who know his name, and have tasted of his love, should be deeply impressed with a concern

* Exodus, xviii. 21.

for his glory [illegible], forsaking their little animosities and party interests, should unite in application to the throne of grace, and be found in those duties and practices which their profession of the Gospel, and the state of things around them require, there is yet hope. For the prayers of God's people have a powerful efficacy. The holy and benevolent importunity of Abraham would have prevailed in favour even of Sodom, if ten righteous persons had been found in it.* When Sennacherib invaded Judea, had overrun the greatest part of the country, and thought Jerusalem would be an easy conquest, Hezekiah, though he took such precautions as prudence suggested, did not defeat him by arms, but by prayer.† In the prayers of true believers is our best visible resource. These are the chariots and horsemen of Israel. United prayer, humiliation of heart, a mourning for sin in secret, and a faithful testimony against it in public, will more essentially contribute to the safety and welfare of the nation, than all our military preparations without them. We boast of our navy, and it has often proved, by the blessing of God, our bulwark; but how easily can he who walketh upon the wings of the wind, dash the best appointed fleet to pieces against the rocks, or sink it like lead in the mighty waters! We boast of our troops; but he can easily cut them off with sickness, give them up to a spirit of discord, or impress them with a sudden terror, so that the stoutest hearts shall tremble, and the mighty warriors turn pale and drop their weapons! A thousand unforeseen events and contingencies are always at his disposal, to blast and disappoint the best concerted enterprises; for that

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* Gen. xviii. † Isa. xxxvii.

the race is not necessarily sure to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,* is not only asserted in the Scripture, but confirmed by the experience and observation of all ages. But his people are precious in his sight, and their prayers he will hear. Unknown and unnoticed as they are in the world, he highly values them. He has redeemed them by his blood; he inhabits them by his Spirit; he has prepared heaven for them; and the earth itself is continued for their sakes, and shall be destroyed when they are all removed from it. They are the light, the salt†, the strength, and the safety of the nations among which they are dispersed. Except the Lord of hosts had left a small remnant‡ of these among us, we should long ago have been as Sodom, and made like unto Gomorrah. To his attention to their prayers and concerns, I doubt not, the preservation of this city, at the time of the late horrible riots, may be ascribed. I wish I could now recall to your minds the emotions which some of you then felt, when your countenances bore a strong impression of your inward anxiety. Those terrors came upon you unexpectedly; and, though they are forgotten by too many, scenes equally distressing may present themselves before you are aware. O may he in mercy animate this remnant, now to stand in the breach as one man, and to wrestle for a sinful land! Then we may at least arise to the hope of the Ninevites, "Who can tell but the Lord may turn from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"§

Let me now close with an address,

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* Psalm xxxiii. 16, 17. Eccles. ix. 11.
† Matth. v. 13, 14.
‡ Isa. i. 9.
§ Jonah, iii. 9.

1. To such of you in this assembly as fear the Lord. A part of you are a poor and afflicted people, and by your obscure situation in life, are precluded from a very distinct knowledge of the causes, the present effects, and possible consequences of the war. You live in a happy ignorance of what passes in the world, and take no part in the disputes which, in many places, ensnare and embitter the spirits even of professors of the Gospel. Your principles inspire you with sentiments of duty to government, with the love of peace, and with a just sense of the value of your privileges, civil and religious. But though you are poor, and can serve your country in no other way, you may serve it effectually by your prayers. You have access to the throne of grace. Intercede, therefore, for a land that lieth in wickedness; be concerned for the honour of his name, for the blindness and misery around you. It may be the Lord will be entreated of you, and for your sakes; and for the sake of such as you, command the destroying angel to stay his hand.

Those of you who have better opportunity of knowing the state of our public affairs, have likewise a more extensive sphere of service. You will, I hope, improve your influence in your families and connexions, and, by your advice and example, endeavour to awaken all with whom you converse, to join in promoting the design of this day's service. I call upon all "who have ears to hear, and eyes to see," the voice and the hand of the Lord, the rich and the poor, the young and the aged, to be faithful, circumspect, and zealous in your several stations.

Should wrath be decreed, and there be no remedy, at least you shall prevail for yourselves. You shall know that the Lord whom you serve is a strong hold

in the day of trouble, and is mindful of them who put their trust in him. You can hardly be too much alarmed for the nation; but for yourselves you have no just cause of fear. We are commissioned to say to the righteous, "It shall be well with him."* The Saviour to whom you have fled for refuge has all power in heaven and earth. He will keep you as the apple of his eye, and hide you under the shadow of his wings. He can screen you from evil, though thousands and ten thousands should suffer and fall around you. Or if he appoints you a share in suffering, he will be with you to support and comfort you, and to sanctify all your troubles. His word to you is, "when you hear of wars and rumours of wars, see that ye be not troubled."† Fear not them who, at the most, can but kill the body. The light of his countenance is sufficient to cheer you in the darkest hour, and your best interest, your everlasting inheritance, is safe beyond the reach of enemies, in a kingdom (how unlike the kingdoms of the earth!) which cannot be shaken.‡ Your life is hid with Christ in God; and "when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory?" Thither neither sin nor sorrow shall be able to follow you. Then your sun shall go down no more, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. In patience, therefore, possess your souls. Be not moved by appearances, but remember all your concerns are in the hands of Him who loved you, and gave himself for you. Let those who know him not, tremble when he ariseth to judgment and to shake terribly the earth; but do

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* Isa. iii. 10
† Matth. xxiv. 6.
‡ Heb. xii. 28.
§ Col. iii. 3, 4.

you sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, make him your fear and your dread, and he shall be to you for a sanctuary;* and in a little time he will come to receive you to himself, and to wipe all tears from your eyes.

2. But what can I say to the rest of the congregation? Though we are all met in the same place, and outwardly engaged in the same service, so that, to the eye of man, we may appear as one people, animated with one and the same desires, the eye of the Searcher of hearts sees and notices a real and important distinction amongst us. He draws, with infallible certainty, the line of separation. He knows who are truly on his side, whose hearts are tender,† who are afraid of his judgments, and are mourning for their own sins, and the sins of the nation; and he knows and sees that too many here have neither his fear nor his love abiding in them. You may comply with an outward form, and abstain from a meal; but you neither abstain from sin, nor desire to do so. To-day, you look serious, and by your presence seem to assent to the confessions which have been made, and the prayers which have been offered in your hearing. To-morrow, I fear, will show that all your semblance of seriousness was but hypocrisy; and that though you drew nigh to God with your lips, your hearts were far from him.‡ But be not deceived; God will not be mocked. You have contributed largely to swell the measure of our national sin; herein you have been hearty and persevering. Do not think that the lip-service of a single day will make any alteration either in your state or in your guilt. Rather that pretended humiliation, by

* Isa. viii. 13, 14. † 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27. ‡ Mark, vii. 6.

which you act towards God as if you thought he was altogether such a one as yourselves,* is an aggravation of your wickedness, and no better than affronting him to his face. Yet I am glad of an opportunity of speaking to you. Oh! that I could prevail on you to seek him in earnest, while he is to be found. You cannot serve, or love, or trust him, unless you be born again. But Jesus is exalted to produce this change in the heart of a sinner, by the power of his Holy Spirit, and to give faith, repentance, and remission of sins. Could I convince you of this, the rest would be easy. Then, feeling your wants and misery, you would ask mercy of him, and asking, you would surely receive; for he has said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."† O Lord, do thou convince them by thine own power! Open the blind eyes, unstop the deaf ears, and turn the stony heart into flesh.

Till this be done, you are neither fit to live, nor fit to die. What will you do in a day of public calamity, should you live to see it, if you should be despoiled of your earthly comforts, and have no share in the consolation of the Gospel? But should the Lord answer prayer, and prolong our national prosperity, still you must be ruined, unless you are saved by grace. For what will you do in the hour of death? This is inevitable, and may, for aught you know, be very near. If I could assure you of peace and wealth for the term of a long life, still, without the peace of God, and an interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ, you must be miserable at the last, and lie down in sorrow.

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* Psalm l. 21. † John, vi. 37.

But, O that we may rather, with one consent, search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord from whom we have so greatly revolted. To us, indeed, belong shame and confusion of face; but to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PAUL'S, DEPTFORD,

On Sunday, May 7, 1786.

ON THE

LAMENTED OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

RICHARD CONYERS, LL. D.

LATE RECTOR OF THAT PARISH.

Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.
MATT. xxiv. 46.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1786.]

TO THE

CHURCH WARDENS AND PARISHIONERS

OF

SAINT PAUL'S, DEPTFORD,

This Sermon is respectfully inscribed,

By the

AUTHOR.

ON THE DEATH OF DR. CONYERS.

THESSALONIANS, ii. 8.

So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

AN active, undaunted zeal in the service of God, and a peculiar tenderness of affection towards his people, were happily and eminently combined in the character of St. Paul. The latter appears in none of his writings to greater advantage than in this epistle, and particularly in this chapter. He had been made very useful to the Thessalonians, and was greatly beloved by them. Many of them had received the Gospel which he preached, not in word only, but in power; and were effectually turned, by grace, from dead idols, to serve the living and the true God.* They likewise were very dear to him; and, being now at a distance from them, he writes to confirm their faith and hope, to animate and direct their conduct. And he takes many occasions of reminding them of the peculiar regard he has borne them from the first, and how near they still were to his heart; that his love for them, which had sweetened all his labours and sufferings when he was among them, made him still solicitous for their welfare, and enabled him to rejoice on their account, while he was suffering bonds and imprisonment at Rome.

The verse I have read is one passage, out of many

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* 1 Thess. i. 5. 9.

in the New Testament, where our translation does not fully come up to the spirit and beauty of the original. Not that it is unfaithful or faulty; it is chiefly owing to the difference of the languages. I believe we have no single word in the English tongue to express the energy of the Greek term which he uses in the beginning of the verse; and therefore our translators have employed two,* "Being affectionately desirous of you." It denotes a desire connected with the finest and most tender feelings of the heart; not like the degrading, selfish desire of the miser for gold; but such an emotion, (according to his own beautiful illustration in the preceding verse,) as that with which the nurse, the mother while a nurse, contemplates her own child. Being thus disposed towards you,† "we were willing;" but the Greek is more emphatical—We esteemed it our pleasure, our joy, the very height of our wishes, "to impart unto you the Gospel of God," to put you into our own place, to communicate to you, by the Gospel, all that comfort, and strength, and joyful hope, which we have received from it ourselves. Yea, further, to have imparted to you "our own souls also;" that is, to devote our whole strength, time, and study, to this very end, to spend and be spent for you, and to be ready to seal our testimony with our blood, if this were needful to your establishment, "because ye were dear unto us,‡ exceedingly dear unto us." The same word is used, (for the language of mortals will not afford a stronger,) Matth. iii. 17. "This is my beloved Son."

When I thought of preaching to you this day, and of mingling my tears with yours, the occasion suggested the choice I have made of a text; and the countenances

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* Ιμειρομενοι. † Ευδοκουμεν. ‡ Αγαπητοι.

of many of you convince me that I have not made an improper choice. Another congregation might have been led, from what I have already said, to sympathize with the Thessalonians, in what they must have felt when they were deprived of such a minister and friend; but your minds are engaged by a sense of your own loss. You have reason. You acknowledge and feel, that if I wished (as I certainly did) to select a text which might, while you heard it, strongly impress your minds with the idea of my dear friend, your late pastor, and recall to your remembrance his principles, actions, motives, and aims; how he spoke, and how he lived among you, I could hardly have found a passage in the whole Scripture more directly suited to my purpose. I believe no minister in the present age, nor, perhaps, in any past age since the apostles' days, could have a better warrant than Dr. Conyers to adopt these words of St. Paul, as expressive of his own spirit and character. He had a very tender affection for you. It was his earnest desire, and his great delight, to impart unto you the Gospel of God, because you were dear to him; and it may be said of him, with peculiar propriety, that in this service of love, he imparted to you his own soul, or life, also. You have not forgotten, surely you never can forget, the very solemn and affecting manner in which his ministry among you closed. Whether, while he was reading the apostle's farewell discourse to the elders of the church of Ephesus,* which occurred in the second lesson for the day, he had a presage that you would see his face no more, we know not. Had he been certain of it, he could not have taken your consciences more earnestly to witness,

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*Acts, xx. 18—35.

that he was clear of your blood, and that he had not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. However, the event proved that you then saw and heard him for the last time. His strength and life were prolonged to finish his discourse, and to pronounce over you his parting blessing, which he had scarcely finished, before he was called home to his Master's joy. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing."*

In considering the grounds of the apostle's love to the Thessalonians, and the proofs which he gave of it, the subject will frequently lead me to bear a testimony to the grace of God, vouchsafed to your late minister, of whom we may truly say, he was a "follower of St. Paul, as Paul also was of Christ."†

I. The first ground, the original cause of the apostle's love to the brethren, was the love of Christ. His unwearied endeavours, in the midst of the hardships and dangers which awaited him in every place, to promote the happiness of mankind, made him appear to many who were unacquainted with the motives of his conduct, as though he were beside himself. The apology he offered was "the love of Christ constraineth us."‡ Till he knew the Lord, he acted very differently. While he was under the power of prejudice and ignorance, he verily thought that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore breathed out threatening and slaughter against his people.§ But Jesus, whom he persecuted, appeared to him in his way to Damascus, convinced him of his sin, vouchsafed him pardon, and commissioned him to

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* Luke, xii. 43.
† 1 Cor. xi. 1.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 14.
§ Acts, ix. 1. xxvi. 9.

preach the faith which he had laboured to destroy.* From that time he esteemed himself a chief sinner, and because much had been forgiven him, he loved much. He devoted his whole future life to proclaim the glory and grace of his Saviour, and to propose himself as a pattern of his long-suffering and mercy to all around him, that they likewise might believe and be saved.† He was conscious of his Saviour's just right to reign in every heart. And they who, by receiving the Gospel which he preached, entered into his views, and loved the Lord whom he loved, instantly became dear to him for his Lord's sake, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, bond or free. It is probable, that all who are convinced and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, having a clearer knowledge of the nature, number, and aggravation of their own sins than they can possibly have of those of any other person, account themselves among the chief of sinners, though many of them may have been preserved from gross enormities. I never heard that your minister was influenced, like Saul of Tarsus, by a bitter, persecuting spirit; and, I believe, his behaviour was moral and exemplary from his youth. When he entered upon his ministry, at his beloved Helmsley, in Yorkshire, he found the place ignorant and dissolute to a proverb. At this early period of life he feared God, and he hated wickedness. With much zeal and diligence he attempted the reformation of his parish, which was of great extent, and divided into several hamlets. He preached frequently in them all. He encouraged his parishioners to come to his house. He distributed them into little companies, that he might instruct them with more con-

* Gal. i. 23. † 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

venience: he met them in rotation, by appointment. In this manner, long before he fully understood that Gospel of God which of late years he so successfully imparted to you, I have been assured that he often preached or exhorted, publicly or more privately, twenty times in a week. These labours were not in vain: a great, visible, and almost universal reformation took place. About the time I am speaking of, a clergyman in his neighbourhood made very honourable mention of Mr. Conyers, in a letter to the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, (which I have seen in print,) as, perhaps, the most exemplary, indefatigable, and successful parochial minister in the kingdom; yet, in the midst of applause and apparent success, he was far from being satisfied with himself. He did what he could; he did more than most others; but he felt there was something still wanting, though, for a time, he knew not what; but he was desirous to know. He studied the Scriptures, and he prayed to the Father of lights. They who thus seek shall surely find. Important consequences often follow from a sudden, involuntary turn of thought. One day an expression of St. Paul's, "the unsearchable riches of Christ,"* engaged his attention. He had often read the passage, but never noticed the word "unsearchable" before. The Gospel, in his view of it, had appeared plain, and within his comprehension; but the apostle spoke of it as containing something that was "unsearchable." A conclusion, therefore, forced itself upon him, that the idea he had hitherto affixed to the word *Gospel*, could not be the same with that of the apostle. From this beginning, he was soon led to perceive that his whole scheme was essentially

* Ephes. iii. 8.

defective; that his people, however outwardly reformed, were not converted. He now felt himself a sinner, and felt his need of faith in a Saviour in a manner he had never done before. Thus he was brought, with the apostle, to account his former gain but loss. The unsearchable riches of Christ opened to his mind, he received power to believe, his perplexities were removed, and he rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He presently told his people, with that amiable simplicity which so strongly marked his character, that, though he had endeavoured to show them the way of salvation, he had misled them; that what both he and they had been building, was not upon the right foundation. He, from that time, preached Jesus Christ, and him crucified, as the only ground of hope for sinners, and the only source from whence they could derive wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* The Lord so blessed his word, that the greater part of the people who were most attached to him soon adopted his views, and many more were successively added to them. This change in his sentiments and manner of preaching, though it added efficacy to his moral instructions, and endeared him to his people at home, lost him much of that high estimation in which he had been held abroad. But he knew the Gospel of God too well to be ashamed of it; whatever disgrace he suffered in such a cause he could bear with patience. He loved his people, and was beloved by them; and their advance in comfort and holiness made him ample compensation for the unkindness of those who knew not what they did. And thus, when the provi-

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* 1 Cor. ii. 2. i. 30.

dence of God removed him hither, the constraining love of Christ, which had long been the great principle of his conduct, disposed him to love you before he saw you; and he came among you with an earnest desire to impart unto you the Gospel of God, and his own soul also, because, from the moment that he accepted the charge over you, he was affectionately desirous of you.

The regard of the apostle to the Thessalonians was, undoubtedly, heightened in proportion as the Lord was pleased to give him seals to his ministry among them. And the like cause had the like effect here. The mutual affection that subsists between a faithful minister and those to whom the Lord makes him useful, is of a peculiar kind, and not easily described. I trust he looked upon many of you with joy, as his "crown and glory in the day of Christ;"* and you, I doubt not, looked on him with respect and gratitude, as the instrument of God in saving your souls, in calling you "out of darkness into marvellous light." What were some of you doing, and whither were you going, when God sent you, by him, the word of salvation? And what a happy change have you since experienced? You were then "dead in trespasses and sins, without Christ, and therefore without hope, and without God in the world; but now you, who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."† Now, being freed from the slavery of sin, "you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life;"‡ You have now access to God, communion with him, an interest in his promises, and a good hope, through grace, that, though your minister be taken from you,

* 1 Thess. ii. 19. † Ephes. ii. 1. 12, 13. ‡ Rom. vi. 22.

he who, by him, "begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* Let this thought moderate your grief. You will see the face of your minister no more here; but you will meet him again, ere long, before the throne of God and the Lamb. Then all tears will be for ever wiped away.

Again: During the apostle's continuance with the Thessalonians, he and they had enjoyed precious seasons of worship together, and of mutual communion with God, in the ordinances of his appointment. "Wherever two or three are met in the Lord's name,"† he is mindful of his promise, and does "manifest himself unto them, as he does not unto the world;"‡ and these tastes of his loving kindness wonderfully soften, spiritualize, and enlarge their affections, and knit them closer and closer together in love. And though that power and unction from on high, which makes the ordinances of the Gospel truly delightful, and an hour so employed preferable to a "thousand"§ of the world's hours, does not altogether depend upon the gifts, or even upon the grace of the minister; yet it is, doubtless, a singular and high privilege to be under the care of a wise and tender shepherd, of one who, in the school of experience, has acquired the "tongue of the learned,"‖ who knows how to adapt himself to the occasions of the people, to give every one their proper portion, to obviate their doubts, relieve their fears, point out their dangers, and to speak a word in season to them that are weary. Be thankful that you were long favoured with such an able minister of the New Testament. As a public preacher, he may, perhaps, have left some

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* Phil. i. 6.
† Matth. xviii. 20.
‡ John, xiv. 22.
§ Psalm lxxxiv. 10.
‖ Isa. l. 4.

equals behind him. But he had at Deptford, as formerly at Helmsley, stated seasons, when he expounded the Scriptures to a smaller auditory in his house, or within his own premises. He supposed that, on these occasions, few persons were present but those who either possessed the peace of the Gospel, or were sincerely seeking it. The simplicity and meekness of wisdom with which, as a father among his children, he exhorted, comforted, and instructed these his more select hearers, seemed peculiar to himself. In this branch of his ministerial office I always thought him unequalled and inimitable. How often have many of you had reason to say, at such seasons, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"* And the great attention with which he was heard, and the proofs he saw that his labours were not in vain, rendered him still more affectionately desirous towards you.

For, lastly, as one great reason why the apostle loved the Thessalonians was, that they were not only hearers, but doers of the word, and he could speak of them with pleasure, and propose them to others as "examples"† of the efficacy and tendency of the Gospel which he preached; so, I trust, yea, I know, that some of you were exceedingly dear to your late minister on this account also. He could say of you, and to you, "now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."‡ He had no greater joy than to see his children walk in the truth,§ and demonstrate, by their conduct, that the Gospel which they professed was a doctrine according to godliness. Those of you who gave him this pleasure,

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* Luke, xxiv. 32.
† 1 Thess. i. 7.
‡ 1 Thess. iii. 8.
§ 3 John, 4.

may, now he is gone, praise God for the grace which enabled you to administer to the comfort of one who so tenderly watched over your souls. He was proportionably affected with pungent grief when any whom he loved acted unsuitably to their profession, though they perhaps seldom knew what their unfaithfulness cost him. In his preaching, he bore a strenuous and faithful testimony against every evil; not only against gross sins, but against every deviation, whether in temper or practice, from the spirit and rule of the Gospel. But there was something in his natural disposition which made it difficult for him to expostulate plainly and strongly in private. In private, he could not easily reprove. But he could mourn; he could wear out the day without pleasure, and the night without rest, in bemoaning those who had neither compassion for him nor themselves. I can affirm this of him, from instances which have come to my own knowledge. Perhaps some person present may think, Surely the preacher has heard of me, and means to point me out to the notice of the congregation. No, it is your own conscience points you out; I know you not. But is it so, indeed, that you broke your minister's rest, and added to his troubles by your miscarriages? You do well to weep: may God give you repentance not to "be repented of."* Will not his lamented and sudden death recall to your remembrance how earnestly he warned you, and pleaded with you, while he was living, and rouse you from that dangerous security into which you have been seduced by the deceitfulness of sin?

II. I have, in a great measure, anticipated what I

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* 2 Cor. vii. 10.

purposed to mention under a second head—the proofs which he gave that the affection he professed for his people was cordial and sincere. But the subject is not exhausted. St. Paul evidenced his love to the Thessalonians, by imparting to them the Gospel of God, and by his unwearied zeal and diligence in their service, in defiance of the difficulties and obstacles which always attended his labours. By the strong expression, that he was ready "to impart unto them his own soul also," he intimates both the energy of his address, and his fixed determination to venture every consequence in their service.

In another place, the apostle, speaking of the doctrine which he preached, says, "according to my Gospel."* It was not a point of speculation with him; he possessed it. He had experienced the power of it; it was the spring of his conduct, the source of his comfort; and was, therefore, properly *his own*. Here he styles it the Gospel of God, perhaps to distinguish it from a pretended Gospel, such as the Galatians received from false teachers, which he calls "another Gospel,"† and which was, indeed, not the Gospel. The true Gospel is of God. It is "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."‡ From whence we infer its certainty, authority, and importance. It is worthy of all acceptation; it is able to make us "wise unto salvation,"§ if cordially embraced; and to neglect it, is to refuse life, to choose death, to resolve to be miserable, and to affront the wisdom and goodness of God. When Paul preached this Gospel at Thessalonica, it

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* Rom. ii. 16.
† Gal. i. 6, 7.
‡ 1 Tim. i. 11.
§ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

awakened the spirit of envy, opposition, and clamour, in many who believed not; but they who received it, experienced it to be the power of God to the salvation of their souls.

This Gospel your late minister preached among you; and, I trust, effectually imparted to many of you, as an instrument of the Holy Spirit. He owed all his success, and you derive all the light and comfort you obtained under his instruction, to the doctrine which he delivered. It cannot, with reason, be expected, that God will afford the seal of his blessing to any scheme of doctrine but his own truth. A preacher may be of a good character in civil life, and diligent in his office; and he may have some success in suppressing outward wickedness, though he does not preach the Gospel of God; but he will not reach the heart of his people, wean them from their secret sins, and win them to the love and practice of universal holiness, unless he preaches St. Paul's Gospel. I hope this congregation has been better taught than to receive every thing indiscriminately for truth, because it is spoken from a pulpit. You have the Scriptures in your hands, and by this standard you are warranted, yea, commanded, to "try the spirits,"* because many false prophets and pretended preachers are abroad in the world. However, I will take the liberty to remind you of some plain and sure marks by which you will be able to distinguish a faithful minister of the true Gospel.

He will preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and propose him as the only foundation of a sinner's hope, the only object of faith, the way, the truth, and the life. He will endeavour to convince you of your need of mercy,

* 1 John, iv. 1.

and then direct your thoughts to the atonement which Christ made for sin, by his bloody death upon the cross. He will give you no encouragement to think you can do any thing well-pleasing to God till you yourselves are first made acceptable in the Beloved; nor until his love is the motive of your obedience, and your dependence is fixed upon the promised communications of strength and grace from his fulness.

By a manifestation of the truth, he will commend himself to your "consciences in the sight of God."* He will not amuse you with the discussion of some curious point, in which you have little immediate interest, or some cold, general, common-place subject. Many sermons, ingenious in their kind, may be compared to a letter put into the post-office without a direction. It is addressed to nobody, it is owned by nobody, and if a hundred people were to read it, not one of them would think himself concerned in the contents. But the word of the Gospel, when faithfully dispensed, searches the heart, and tries the reins.† You will wonder that the preacher, who, perhaps, is a stranger to you, can so exactly suit himself to your case. He will sometimes bring to your remembrance what you have done or said, or even what you have only thought, and which, possibly you had forgotten. So that if you are going on in your sins, or are veiled under a cloak of hypocrisy, you will be ready to start, and think he is about to expose you publicly. Or if you are a mourner in Zion, distressed with fear and temptation, beset with trouble, and know not which way to turn; that tongue of the learned, which he has acquired in the school of experience, will frequently lead him, while speaking

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* 2 Cor. iv. 2. † Heb. iv. 12.

from his own feelings, to meet you with a word in season, so exactly suited to your case, that if you had told him the state of your mind, and every particular of your situation beforehand, he could not have described them better. Such is the correspondence between the word of God and the heart of man; and such is the similarity of the workings of the human heart in similar circumstances, that the preacher who is enlightened by the Scripture and by the Holy Spirit, while he does little more than relate the exercises of his own mind, appears to many of his hearers to express their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, better than they could have expressed them to him. Thus it is that "the secrets of the heart are made manifest"* by the preaching of the Gospel. All other preaching compared with this is lifeless, distant, and unaffecting, little more than declamation; but the words of a "scribe,"† well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God, come home to our own business and bosoms, and constrain many to say, with the woman of Samaria, "Come and see a man which told me all things that ever I did."‡

A true servant of God in the Gospel may likewise be known, at least in the place where he resides, or statedly labours, by a certain mixed kind of character, which he will receive from public report. The general tenour of his conduct will be such, that the feeble attempts of slander to vilify him will be gradually suppressed, and they who would speak evil of him be put to shame and to silence by his "good conversation in Christ."§ But, though his behaviour be unimpeach-

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* 1 Cor. xiv. 25.
† Matth. xiii. 52.
‡ John, iv. 29.
§ 1 Pet. iii. 16.

able and exemplary, his principles will be misunderstood and misrepresented; and by different persons, (sometimes by the same persons,) very different and inconsistent things will be laid to his charge. He will often be deemed rigid, precise, uncharitable, enjoining a strictness in life and manners to the extreme; so that, to adopt his views, and to follow his rules, a person must bid farewell to comfort, and almost renounce society; while in the same day, and almost in the same breath, he will be represented as preaching doctrines which, if generally received, would be unfavourable to good morals, and promote licentiousness. For the natural heart has a dislike, equally, to the grace and to the holiness of the Gospel. Salvation by faith in the blood of Jesus is thought too easy, and affording too much encouragement to the unworthy; and the simple, grateful obedience which characterizes those who seek salvation in this way, and in no other, is thought too strict and scrupulous, and carrying of things a great deal too far. They who are of the world, who speak to the world, and whom the world is willing to hear, give no offence, and therefore no clamour is excited against them; but a faithful minister will not be exposed to the "wo"* denounced against those of whom all men speak favourably. His infirmities and mistakes (for he is not perfect) will be eagerly noticed and exaggerated; and if no just fault can be found, he must, at least, expect to be spoken of as an enthusiast, or branded by some name to which ignorance and prejudice have affixed a contumelious sense.

Such a one was your late minister. Like the apostle, he laboured to impart to his hearers the Gospel

* Luke, vi. 26.

of God: like him, he was unmoved by the opposition of those who knew not what they did, and ready to "endure all things for the elects' sakes, that they might be saved."* He loved you, and was willing to impart to you his own soul also. His spirit was willing; he did much, and wished he could have done more.

It was, indeed, a surprise to many who were not intimately acquainted with him, that he did no more. And it may be thought by some persons, that as, by his countenance, he seemed to enjoy a tolerable share of health, his public services were hardly answerable to the zeal of a man who was ready to pour out his very life for the good of souls. He preached but once a-week in his parish church; and no arguments, persuasions, or entreaties, could prevail on him to enter any pulpit but his own. Even when he has been expressly nominated by his diocesan to preach in another church, he has declined the service, and disappointed crowded auditories who wished to hear him. The benefits of his singular abilities were, therefore, confined to his own congregations. And it was with the greatest difficulty, and but seldom, that his most intimate friends could engage him to lead in family-worship, where he has been occasionally present. I have frequently mentioned to him my concern that the sphere of his usefulness should be so much limited; and he lamented it himself, but his hindrance was constitutional and invincible. He had a continual hurry and flutter upon his spirits; the effects of which were unaccountable to those who knew not the cause. Taken in different views, he might be considered as very happy or very uncomfortable at the same instant. In the most im-

* 2 Tim. ii. 10.

portant sense, he was a happy man. He had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, enjoyed much of the light of his countenance, and had no perplexing doubts respecting either his acceptance in the Beloved, or his perseverance in grace. Yet, through the agitation of his spirits, he spent his days, and almost every hour, in trepidation and alarm. The slightest incidents were sufficient to fill him with fears, which, though he knew to be groundless, he could not overcome. But upon no occasions did he suffer more from these painful feelings than when he had public preaching in prospect. When he met his people at home, he usually found pleasure and liberty, unless he observed some new faces. But the sight of a stranger, especially if he knew or suspected him to be a minister, would sometimes distress him greatly, and almost disable him from speaking. It may seem very extraordinary, that a man of the first abilities as a preacher, highly respected and honoured with eminent usefulness, should be intimidated by the presence of those who were much his inferiors. But such was his burden, which neither reflection nor resolution could remove. What he often suffered before he ascended this pulpit, and when he looked round upon a large congregation, and knew not how many such persons as he was afraid of, might be among them, gave him a right to say, in a singular sense, that in imparting the Gospel of God to you, he imparted his own soul also. Perhaps there have been martyrs who approached the rack or the stake with less distressing sensations than he has frequently felt when about to enter upon his otherwise delightful work. Yet, because you were the people of his immediate charge, and dear to him, he seldom declined your service on the forenoon of the Lord's day, if he was well. But this, I believe, was the reason, that at

other times, instead of preaching in the church, he confined himself to a place where few, comparatively, could attend him. I do not know, that while he lived at Deptford, he ever preached publicly in this neighbourhood, excepting once, when he accepted an appointment to preach at the archdeacon's visitation at Dartford. But he kept his intention a secret in his own breast; and did not mention it to his nearest friends, lest a multitude should be drawn to hear him. And he told me himself, that from the hour he stood engaged, which was several weeks before the time, he could scarcely think of any thing else; and that when the day arrived, his spirits were so greatly agitated, that for some minutes after he was in the pulpit he was deprived of his eye-sight. But the Lord, whom he served, supported him; and he was, upon the whole, carried comfortably through the service.

If we speak of death as the moment of separation between soul and body, he was not afraid of it; for he knew in whom he believed, and that to depart and be with his Lord, was πολλω μαλλον κρεισσον,* unspeakably preferable to any thing that could be enjoyed in the present life. But though not afraid of *death*, he was often afraid of *dying*. His apprehensions of the possible forerunners and concomitants of a dying hour, frequently made a painful impression upon his spirits. Upon this account, they who loved him have reason to be reconciled to the suddenness of his removal. His was an honourable dismission indeed! The messenger that called him home found him actually and actively employed in his Master's service, with his "loins girded up, and his lamp burning."† It was, likewise,

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* Phil. i. 23. † Luke, xii. 35.

a gracious condescension to his infirmity, and saved him from an experience of any of those conflicts which he could seldom think of without anxiety and a degree of anguish.

Upon the whole, I may say of Dr. Conyers, without just fear of contradiction, "he was a burning and a shining light."* Many of you rejoiced in his light; and now the man who cared for your souls, who was the minister of God to you for good, is taken from you, your sorrow is proportionable. Yet, if you truly entered into his views, you are not destitute. The Saviour whom he preached, and in whom you have believed, is still with you. The stream, at which you have often drank and found refreshment, is dried up; but the fountain of living water, from whence it was derived, is always full and always flowing. Whoever dies, Jesus lives; the residue of the Spirit is with him, and he is at no loss for means to communicate his blessings to those who wait upon him; yea, under his management, even losses prove gains, and apparent hindrances work to the help and furtherance of faith. Be thankful that you were so long favoured with such a minister; and rejoice that, though you can see him no more in this world, you shall meet him again in the world of light. In the mean time, (need I say,) respect and honour his memory; and the most effectual manner by which you can show your regard to him, will be by walking as he walked, and maintaining a "conversation"† becoming the Gospel, which he so affectionately and faithfully imparted to you.

But there are, I fear, amongst you those who accounted the joyful sound of the Gospel, which he pro-

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* John, v. 35. † Phil. i. 27.

claimed, a burden; have been wearied by his earnest endeavours to pluck you as brands from the burning, and have often wished to be freed from his importunity. Now you have your wishes. Your faithful monitor is removed. He will alarm your consciences, he will offend your pride, no more. But if, after slighting his labours of love while he lived, you remain likewise unaffected by his death, you are much more to be pitied than those who lament his removal. Alas! when numbers, in different and distant places, who never saw you, are concerned for you, will you not yet be concerned for yourselves? Tremble, lest you should have cause to say, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, but we are not saved!"* You have had your opportunity, a day of grace, in which the things pertaining to your peace have been set before you. The Lord forbid that the following words should be applicable to you: "But now they are hidden from your eyes!"† The Saviour, whom you have too long slighted, is now once more preached to you. He is still upon a throne of grace, able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. But, hereafter, he will appear on a throne of judgment, "taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his Gospel."‡

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* Jer. viii. 20. † Luke, xix. 42. ‡ 2 Thess. i. 8.

THE BEST WISDOM:

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

On Wednesday, November 21, 1787;

THE DAY OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE AMONG THE POOR.

As every man hath received, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.—1 Pet. iv. 10.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1787.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

The importunity of friends is not pleaded as an excuse for this publication, but, simply, the importance of the subject.

Nor is this discourse offered as an exact copy of what was preached: but it is as nearly so as recollection could make it. They who heard the one, if they read the other, will, probably, recognise the same leading sentiments in both; and, perhaps, a page or two would contain all that has been either added or omitted.

Coleman-street Buildings, Jan. 1, 1788.

THE BEST WISDOM.

PROVERBS, xi. 30.

—He that winneth souls is wise.

ONLY He who redeemed the soul by his blood, is able effectually to win it to himself. The work is his, and they who know him will render the praise to him alone. But in this respect, as in many others, there is an analogy between the natural and the moral world. In both, he displays his power, and executes his purposes, by an instituted course of means and instruments. In both, he often so conceals his operations under the veil of second causes, that to a common and inattentive eye, he seems to do nothing, when, in reality, he does all. The manna with which he fed Israel in the wilderness, though more immediately and visibly, was not more certainly the effect and proof of his providence and goodness, than the bread by which we live. It is he who giveth the earth virtue to produce corn;* the discretion of the husbandman who prepareth the ground and soweth the seed is from him;† and the influence of the sun and the rain, so necessary to ripen the grain, and to clothe the fields with plenty in the season of harvest, is the influence of him who worketh all in all.‡ In this process, the blessing which secures the desired event, is wholly from the Lord, though the labour of man and the use of means are indispensable, because his appointment has made them so.

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* Psalm civ. 14. † Isa. xxviii. 24—29. ‡ Matth. v. 45.

Thus, in the great concern of winning souls, though God (whose thoughts and ways are above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth) may sometimes, as in the instance of the apostle Paul,* affect and win the heart by an immediate and instantaneous exertion of his power; yet this is not his ordinary method. Though fallen, we are still rational creatures, and he is pleased to treat us as such. He proposes considerations and motives in his holy word, which, though ineffectual, considered merely as means, and without the concurrence of his agency, yet have, in their own nature, a moral tendency and suitableness to awaken our attention, to convince us of our sin and misery, and to recall us to our original state of dependence upon his goodness, and obedience to his will. For the proof of this, I may appeal to the consciences of many persons. The force of truth has compelled them to tremble like Felix, and, perhaps, like Herod, to do many things; and though their depravity has been too obstinate to yield to conviction, they have understood and felt enough to leave them without excuse.

The Lord God usually employs those whom he has already won and subdued by his grace, as instruments of winning others; and there are none of his people, however weak their capacities, or however low their situations in life, but may hope for a share in this honour, if they are faithful to the light he has given them, and live according to the rule of his word. But he has instituted the office of the Gospel-ministry with a more especial view to this important service.

The proposition in the text is simple and plain; and the principal division of my subject is suggested by the

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* Acts, ix. 6.

appearance of our present assembly. I never had an opportunity before of preaching to so many of my brethren in the ministry, and perhaps I never may again. And, at my time of life, it becomes me, whenever I stand in the pulpit, to consider seriously, that it is at least possible it may be the last time, and that you, to whom I am now about to speak, may see my face no more. Were I even sure of this, how could I more properly close my public services, than by aiming, with my latest breath, to impress upon you, my friends and brethren, this weighty aphorism, "He who winneth souls is wise." May it be written upon my own heart while I live! may it be written upon all our hearts! Let the scholar, the philosopher, the politician, settle their several claims to wisdom among themselves; but may this wisdom be ours. The man that winneth souls is truly and emphatically wise.

I shall, in the first place, point out the principal acknowledged characteristics of wisdom, and show that they are all exemplified in the spirit and conduct of the minister who is duly qualified for the service of winning souls. I do not say that all faithful ministers are influenced by this wisdom in the same degree; but unless it has an habitual and prevailing influence on the plans and practice of a public teacher, we need not wonder if he be neither faithful nor useful. My chief design is to elucidate and confirm this first point; but, towards the close of my discourse, I shall, secondly, address myself to private Christians, and remind you of your common interest with us in this concern, and the advantages and opportunities you have of showing yourselves wise, by contributing your endeavours to promote the great design of winning souls.

I. The minister who winneth souls is wise.

1. Wisdom is discovered in the choice of a fit and valuable end. If a man has great talents and abilities, we do not account him wise, unless he employs them properly; a life whiled away in low and trivial pursuits, implies a want of wisdom. But he who aims at winning souls, proposes an end which well deserves his application; and will, so far as he succeeds, richly compensate him for all that he can do or suffer in so good a cause. The grand object of his life, in subordination to the will and glory of God, is the recovery of souls. We often use the word *win*, in a sense which the Hebrew term suggests; as, to win a battle or a fortress. The soul, in its fallen state, separated and alienated from God, is, by his righteous permission, under the power of Satan, who rules in it as a strong one armed in his own house or castle.* Were the effects of this bondage confined to the present life, an attempt to free the soul from that misery, mischief, and madness, with which the world is filled, would be honourable and important. But God, who formed the soul originally for himself, has given it such a vast capacity, that nothing short of himself can satisfy its desires; and it is likewise, by its constitution, immortal. This capacity of being exquisitely happy or miserable, and that for ever, renders the soul so valuable in the judgment of its Creator, that He gave the Son of his love to redeem it from sin and misery, by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. By this adorable method of adjusting the demands of his justice and the honour of his government, to the purposes of his mercy, his wisdom and glory are more eminently discovered to his intelligent creatures, than by all his

* Luke, xi. 21. Eph. ii. 2.

other works. If the only wise God commends to us his gracious design of recovering souls from the dominion of Satan, and of winning them to himself, as the highest instance of his wisdom and goodness; then, certainly, he who proposes it as the great end of his life, that, by serving God in the ministry, he may be an instrument of winning souls, is truly wise, so far as concerns his leading aim and object.

2. Wisdom directs us likewise to a consideration and choice of means proper to the attainment of a proposed end. To attempt what is impracticable, however desirable it might be thought, upon a supposition that it could be accomplished, is a mark, not of wisdom, but of folly. A man, without being chargeable with rashness, may undertake to move a stone of several tons weight, and even to raise it, if needful, to the top of a tower; or to force open the strongest gate of a castle; but then the application of mechanical powers would be necessary. If he were unacquainted with these, or disdained to employ them; if, without estimating or considering the resistance to be overcome, and relying solely on his personal strength, he should attempt to move the enormous stone with his hands, or to burst the gates of brass and bars of iron asunder with his feet, his utmost efforts must issue in weariness and disappointment, and no one would think him wise. The experience of ages has demonstrated all endeavours to win souls, to free them from prejudice, to reclaim them from the love and practice of sin, by the mere force of human arguments and moral suasion, to be equally chimerical and unsuccessful. The Heathen moralists laboured much in this way; but they laboured in vain. Some of them felt and acknowledged that human nature was depraved; but not knowing the

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root, nor the extent, nor the proper remedy of the disorders they wished to cure, their best sentiments, howeve pecious in theory, made little more impression upon the hearts of their admirers, or even upon their own, than the falling snow makes upon a rock. If the ancient sages could do but little, the modern philosophers, as they choose to be called, have done, if possible, still less. What a poet observed of the former, is, at least, equally applicable to the latter, *Virtus laudatur et alget.* Virtue is defined, described, recommended, and praised, but wickedness and folly rapidly increase under their instructions; and while in their pompous declamations they propose liberty to others, they are themselves the servants, the slaves of corruption.* The Gospel of Christ, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God,† is the only effectual mean for reforming mankind. To the man who possesses, and knows the use of this grand, this wonderful machine, if I may be allowed the comparison, what is otherwise impracticable becomes easy. The Gospel removes difficulties insuperable to human power. It causes‡ the blind to see, the deaf to hear; it softens the heart of stone, and raises the dead in trespasses and sins to a life of righteousness. No force but that of the Gospel is sufficient to remove the moutainous load of guilt from an awakened conscience, to calm the violence of tumultuous passions, to raise an earthly soul from grovelling in the mire of sensuality or avarice, to a spiritual and divine life, a life of communion with God. No system but the Gospel can communicate motives, encouragements, and prospects, sufficient to

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* 2 Pet. ii. 19. † 1 Tim. i. 11. ‡ Isa. xxxv. 8. Matth. xi. 5.

withstand and counteract all the snares and temptations with which the spirit of this world, by its frowns or its smiles, will endeavour either to intimidate or to bribe us from the path of duty. But the Gospel, rightly understood and cordially embraced, will inspire the slothful with energy, and the fearful with courage. It will make the miser generous, melt the churl into kindness, tame the raging tiger in the breast; and, in a word, expand the narrow, selfish heart, and fill it with a spirit of love to God, cheerful, unreserved obedience to his will, and benevolence to mankind.

I shall not trespass upon your time, by delineating at large my idea of the Gospel. Yet it may be proper to mention three points, which, in my judgment, are essential to it.

The first respects the character of Jesus the Saviour. That he is very God, and very man, "God manifest in the flesh:" that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God:"* that this divine Word assumed our nature into a personal union with himself, lived and died in behalf of sinners, and now reigns upon the throne of glory, over all, God blessed for ever: that He is the proper object of our worship, supreme love, trust, and adoration: that it is He on whom the eyes and expectation of sinners, sensible of their wants and miseries, are fixed; and out of whose fulness they all receive life, strength, comfort, and grace, to help in time of need.† This doctrine is the pillar and ground of truth.‡ They who have a right sense of the guilt and power of sin, of the holiness and majesty of God, and of the

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* 1 Tim. iii. 16. John, i. 1. 14.
† Psalm xxxiv. 5. John, i. 16.
‡ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

hosts of enemies combined against their peace, must sink into despair, unless supported by the knowledge of an Almighty Omnipresent Saviour, who is always near, a very present help in trouble, and who can discern the thoughts of the heart;* for often their most trying and dangerous exigencies are beyond the reach of a creature's eye. Whatever they thought of him before, when they know themselves, they cannot intrust their souls to the power, or care, or compassion of a creature; and, therefore, rejoice that they are warranted and encouraged to commend themselves to him as to a faithful Creator.†

The second grand peculiarity of the Gospel is the doctrine of an atonement: that Christ, in his state of humiliation, by his "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross,"‡ made a full, proper, and perfect satisfaction for sin; that is, his sufferings unto death, the torments which he endured in his body, and the agonies of his soul, inconceivable to us but by their effects, (his bloody sweat in the garden, and his astonishing complaint upon the cross, that God had forsaken him,) exhibited a striking and solemn proof to the world, to the universe, no less to angels than to men, that God, in affording mercy to sinners, still shows his inflexible displeasure against sin, and makes no relaxation in the awful demands of his holiness, justice, and truth. A substitution capable of manifesting the justice of God in the highest exercise of his mercy, that he might appear just in justifying the ungodly,§ was of such vast importance to the honour of God's character and government, that if it could have been effected by any inferior means, Christ died in vain.‖

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* Rev. ii. 23.
† 1 Pet. iv. 19.
‡ Phil. ii. 8.
§ Rom. iv. 5.
‖ Gal. ii. 21.

The interposition of a mere creature, even if voluntary, (but what creature would dare to draw upon himself the displeasure of God due to the sins of men,) could not have displayed the full-orbed glory of all the divine perfections, as it now shines forth in the person of Jesus Christ.* None in heaven or on earth were able or worthy to interpose. Therefore the Son said "Lo, I come!" He himself, his ownself, bore our sins in his own body upon the tree.† He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.‡

There is a third point, which is peculiar to the religion of the Bible, and which discriminates it from all religious systems of human institution. There are few of these but contain some important truths. In general, they inculcate a degree of attention to the practice of social virtues. But no other system ever proposed, to all persons, and as a general truth, the necessity and certainty of supernatural influence and agency; an agency which, from the greatness of its effect and the universality of its proposal, (being promised to all, without exception, who desire it,) must be divine. That the bodies of believers are the temples of the Holy Ghost;§ that God dwelleth in them by his Spirit; that they have received the Spirit of God; that they are led by the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and have communion with the Holy Spirit;‖ these truths are either expressed, or strongly implied, in almost every page of the New Testament.

The Gospel, then, is a message from God. It stains the pride of human glory, and, without regarding the

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* 2 Cor. iv. 6. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 21. ‖ Rom. viii. 4. Gal. v. 18. 25.
† 1 Pet. ii. 24. § 1 Cor. vi. 19. 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

petty distinctions which obtain amongst men, with respect to character or ranks, it treats them all as sinners in the sight of God, and under the power of depravity strengthened by habit. As such, it points them to a Saviour; it invites and enjoins them to apply to him, to submit to him, and to put their whole trust in him; to renounce all pleas of their own, and to plead his name and his atonement for their pardon and acceptance; and promises to all who thus plead, that the Holy Spirit of God will visit them, dwell in them, and abide with them, to enable them, by his gracious influence, both to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

I omit other particulars, nor shall I, at present, attempt to prove these, further than by an appeal to observation and experience. I trust, my brethren, we all desire to win souls. It is a good desire, it is a noble, a glorious ambition. I hope we are likewise apprized of the nature of the undertaking, and are too wise to attempt it, or to expect success, by any power or exertion of our own, unless we faithfully and humbly make use of the instrument which God has appointed for the purpose. This instrument is the Gospel message, the principal parts of which I have stated to you. This is the rod of God's strength, which, like the wonder-working rod of Moses, when held up in his name, though wielded by a feeble arm, can perform miracles. And I will venture to affirm, without hesitation and without exception, that no man, whatever his abilities and qualifications may be in other respects, though he had the zeal of a martyr and the powers of an angel, will be able to force the strong holds of Satan, to cast down the lofty imaginations of men, and win souls to holiness and happiness, without it. But if he be called and taught of God to preach this Gospel, he will do

great things; he will be honoured and successful; he will win souls; he will be numbered among the wise.

Let us appeal to facts. The apostle Paul was eminently successful in winning souls. He planted churches in many different and distant parts of the Roman empire; wherever he went, power from on high accompanied his word, and made it effectual, according to the commission he had received from the Lord, to open the eyes of the blinded Heathens, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Can we propose a better example for our imitation? Would we know the subject-matter of that preaching which produced such extensive and salutary effects? He gives us full information. He preached Christ crucified; Christ the wisdom and power of God;† the unsearchable riches of Christ;‡ Christ the Man who shall judge the quick and dead; Christ as God, who purchased the church with his own blood.§ As a wise master-builder, he laid this foundation, and declared that "other foundation can no man lay."‖ He preached the atonement, that Christ made peace by the blood of his cross, died for us while sinners, and that we are justified by his blood.** He preached the agency of the Holy Spirit, as absolutely necessary and powerfully efficacious; and ascribes that operation, by which Christ in his true character is revealed to the heart, to the same power which commanded light to shine out of darkness, in the beginning.†† These truths were the weapons of his warfare.‡‡. He went

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* Acts, xxvi. 18.
† 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.
‡ Ephes. iii. 8.
§ Acts, xvii. 31. xx. 28.
‖ 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11.
** Col. i. 20.
†† 2 Cor. iv. 6.
‡‡ 2 Cor. x. 4.

forth conquering and to conquer, not by the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the spirit of demonstration and power.

I need not tell this auditory what were the doctrines which shook the pillars and foundations of Popery at the Reformation, and diffused a knowledge and practice becoming the profession of Christianity, among many which had been long involved in the darkness of ignorance, superstition, and wickedness. In our own land, it was not very long before the principles of the Reformation were severely discountenanced. Particularly in the reign of Charles the second, they were opposed by methods which the good providence of God at length effectually restrained, by favouring us with a succession of princes of the house of Hanover. If the lives and conduct of those who endured fines, stripes, imprisonment, and death, for conscience sake, be compared with the spirit and temper of those who inflicted or approved them, I think a candid and attentive inquirer will be at no loss to determine on which side the advantage lay, in point of real religion and sound morality.

The spirit of our present excellent constitution and government, allows us a degree of religious liberty unknown to our forefathers, for which we cannot be sufficiently thankful; and the doctrines of the Reformation, and of the apostles, are still preached. Nor have we reason to fear that sanguinary laws, and the iron hand of arbitrary power, will be employed to silence us. Yet the doctrines themselves are far from being generally acceptable. The spirit of opposition is awake, and active as formerly, though the method of its attack is varied. But great is the truth, and will prevail. It has triumphed over violence and rage; it is

equally superior to the arts of subtlety and refinement. We are not afraid to repeat the apostle's challenge: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"* Which is the scheme of religion in the present day, which produces the most conscientious reverence to the holy name of the Lord our God, the most habitual and devout observance of his holy day, and of family worship? What kind of preaching evidences itself to be a doctrine according to godliness, by the most numerous and notorious instances of persons reclaimed by it from habits of gross licentiousness, and effectually taught to fear the Lord and depart from evil? What are those principles, which, by experience, are found most suitable, and most powerful, to support the soul under the pressure of great afflictions, or upon the near approach of death? I know there are people under afflictions, who, like Pharaoh, harden themselves yet more; who value themselves upon a proud stoical resolution, and deem it a weakness to complain. But Christian fortitude is a very different thing. It is the temper of a humbled, pardoned sinner, who has intrusted himself and his all to the Saviour, and, believing that he condescends to direct all his concerns, submits to his appointments, not by constraint, but willingly; sensible that the wisdom and love of him, in whom he confides, will choose better for him than he could possibly choose for himself. I know, or have read that the American Indians, when put to death by their enemies, in the midst of the most excruciating tortures that cruelty can invent, will sing their war songs, and insult their tormentors, without uttering a groan or shedding a tear;

* 1 John, v. 5.

and I have likewise read of philosophers, who, to confirm their admirers in a persuasion that infidelity had freed them from all fear of death or its consequences, have jested in their dying hours. What a contrast to these is the relation we have of the death of Stephen, who, with the utmost composure, committed his departing spirit into the hands of his Saviour, whom he saw ready to receive him, and employed his latest breath in prayer for his murderers!* When a believer in Jesus is about to die, he does not express the fiend-like phrenzy of a savage, or the ill-timed levity of a buffoon; he is serious and collected. Conscious of his unworthiness, but knowing in whom he has believed, he rejoices with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.† There is often a dignity and energy in the language of plain people in dying circumstances, far superior to what might be expected from their former habits of life: they seem to have new ideas and new faculties; heaven opened to them, and opened in them, while yet in the body. Ignorant and profane persons, who are sometimes spectators of such scenes, have been astonished at effects which, though they could not account for, have, for the moment, secretly extorted from them the wish of Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."‡ By these effects on the lives and deaths of those who cordially receive it, the Gospel which we preach, the doctrine of the cross, approves itself to be the power of God unto salvation, the sure and only mean of winning souls to His favour and image.

If I have taken up too much of your time with this second particular, let the importance of it, and the

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* Acts, vii. 54—60. † 1 Pet. i. 8. ‡ Numb. xxiii. 10.

state of religion amongst us, plead my excuse. Thus far we have advanced—If it be wisdom to aim at a great design, and to adopt the most fit and proper means for the accomplishment, the man my text speaks of is wise. His end is great, to win souls. The mean he employs is the Gospel, which God has revealed and instituted for this very purpose, and with which his power and blessing are surely connected by promise.

3. Yet the knowledge of a worthy end, and of the means by which it may be attained, is not sufficient to denominate a wise man. If he be truly wise, and his object of great importance, he will not suffer himself to be easily diverted from it, but will rather hold and manage every inferior concernment in a due subservience and subordination to his main point. Sir Isaac Newton, when a child, might possibly have amused himself, as many other children have done, by blowing up bubbles in soapy water with a pipe. But it was not a childish amusement in the hands of this sublime genius, when he applied it, among other experiments, to discover and establish that theory of light and colours, by which, in his admirable system of Optics he enlightened the world. But if we speak strictly, the most important employments and discoveries of which mankind are capable, if directed no higher than to the concerns of the present life, are trivial and worthless as the sports of children, or the wretched amusements of lunatics, to an immortal, who is soon, very soon, to pass into the unseen world, to appear before the judgment-seat of God, and to be fixed, according to his righteous award, in a state of endless happiness or misery. The desire of pleasing God, and of doing all to his glory, which should be the ultimate end of a rational creature, and will be, if he feels his depen-

dence and his obligations; this, like the fabled philosopher's stone, turns every thing into gold, sanctifies the most common actions of life which belong to the situation in which Divine Providence has placed us, and gives them a sublimity and dignity. Consecrated by this intention, they become acts of devotion. They have a very low idea of religion who confine it to what we usually mean by devotional exercises. The truly religious man, does, indeed, bow his knees in secret before the Most High God; he carefully consults his holy word; he waits upon him in his public ordinances. In these ways he derives fresh supplies from the fountain of wisdom and grace, and his strength is renewed. But he does not leave his religion in the closet or the church; it abideth in him, is the governing spring of his whole conduct, and according to the degree of his attainment in faith and love, and allowing for the unavoidable abstractions incidental to our frames, (which are too weak and limited to be able to fix our attention closely upon many things at once,) whether he be upon the throne or the bench, upon the parade or the exchange; whether he be called to serve God in a public capacity or in private life, whether he be in a state of affluence, or earns his honest bread by sweeping the streets—in every station and situation he is a servant of God from morning to night; and these very different services are all equally acceptable to Him, who seeth not as man seeth, and estimates them, not by their comparative importance in our view, but according to the principle of love by which they are performed, and the sublime end to which they are directed.

But we, my brethren, who are ministers of the Gospel, have this great advantage, (if, indeed, we improve it,) that our particular calling, as members of society,

coincides with our general calling as Christians. The person who serves God in a secular calling, may, as I have observed, be equally acceptable to God, because equally devoted to his will; but his advantages and opportunities for winning souls are not equal to ours. It is our professed and appropriate business; and we are freed from the encumbrances of worldly business, that we may give our whole attention to this very thing.* If we are wise, we shall watch and pray against being impeded by any studies or pursuits which have not an evident tendency to promote our success in winning souls. You have probably heard what is related of the address of whale-fishers, when the whale, irritated by the wounds he has received, attacks their boats. It is said they have a tub in readiness to throw into the sea, and that while the whale furiously encounters the tub, the boat has time to escape. Whether this be fact or not, methinks it may suggest a useful lesson to us. Many things, not criminal in themselves, will prove so to us, if we suffer them, by engrossing too much of our time and thoughts, to divert us from our principal object. It may not be wrong, it may be commendable, for a minister to possess some general knowledge of philosophy, history, criticism, and other branches of literature, or of the controversies which have disturbed the peace of the church. But *perimus in licitus.* An over attachment to these studies, though less scandalous, may prove little less hurtful to our ministry than the love of pleasure or the love of money. He who is duly sensible of the importance and difficulty of winning souls, will find but little leisure for sorting shells or butterflies, for studying grammatical niceties, for

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* Acts, vi. 4. 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16.

poring over manuscripts scarcely legible, for deciphering ancient inscriptions, or entangling himself in the dry, uninteresting thickets of controversy. He will be careful lest avocations of this kind should prove, like the tubs I have mentioned, amusements to divert his attention from the state of souls around him, who are in danger of perishing in ignorance and sin. We are set as watchmen to sound the alarm, to warn the wicked of their evil ways, to direct inquirers into the paths of peace, to point out the snares and temptations to which they are exposed, to exhort and charge those who profess the truth that they walk worthy of God, who has called them to his kingdom and glory; in a word, to use our best endeavours publicly, and from house to house, in season and out of season,* to build up our hearers in their most holy faith. We are to give an account of the talents, opportunities, and souls intrusted to us; and we should tremble at the thought of being then obliged to confess, "while thy servant was busy here and there, the man was gone."† If such an eminent servant of God as archbishop Usher, though possessed of the faith and hope of the Gospel, found cause, when reviewing his past life on his dying bed, to cry out repeatedly and earnestly, "Lord, forgive my sins of omission;" how jealous ought we to be of ourselves! It behooves us to use the language of Nehemiah to many proposals and pursuits which our inclinations may plead for, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?"‡ Seldom is any man remarkably successful and eminent in arts

* Acts, xx. 20. 2 Tim. iv. 2. † 1 Kings, xx. 40. ‡ Neh. vi. 3.

or sciences, in the acquisition of wealth or power, who does not resolutely deny himself in other respects, and make every secondary point give place, so far as it stands in competition with his leading and favourite object. Such a determined resolution, to follow the avowed design of our calling as the *one thing*, in comparison with which every thing else is to be undervalued and neglected, if likely to hinder us, is essential to that wisdom which alone can qualify us for winning souls.

4. This wisdom implies fortitude also. If we engage in this work without counting the cost, and without being apprized of the difficulties and snares to which it may expose us; or if we cannot, in some measure, say with the apostle, "None of these things move me,"* we shall, probably, be soon discouraged. What should we think of a statesman, who, having formed a wise and noble plan for the benefit of a kingdom, and having the means necessary to accomplish it within his power, should be deterred from carrying it into execution, though it was approved by all competent judges, merely because he could not bear to be misunderstood or misrepresented by the very lowest of the people, or by the children who play in the street? His want of spirit, upon such a supposition, would, doubtless, be esteemed a want of wisdom. But this is a faint representation of our folly, if believing ourselves to be the servants of God, being convinced, as we say, of the worth and danger of souls, and knowing that the Gospel of God, committed to our trust,† is the only possible mean of their recovery, a regard to the fear or favour of men should prevail on us to suppress or soften

* Acts, xx. 24. † 1 Thess. ii. 4.

our message, and to accommodate ourselves to their taste, instead of conforming to our instructions, lest we should displease them. Would an earthly king bear with an ambassador who was guilty of such timid treachery? We cannot, my brethren, think too humbly of ourselves; but we may magnify our office, and we ought. In this sense, at least, we are ambassadors "for Christ,"* that the message we are to deliver is not ours, but His, by whom we are sent. We are not answerable for the success, but we are under the strongest obligation to be faithful. And he, whose we are, and whom we serve, is well able to support us. Let us not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their revilings.† In the sight of our Lord God all the nations of the earth collected are less than nothing, and vanity, inconsiderable as the drop which falls unperceived from the bucket, or the dust which cleaves to the scales without affecting the balance.‡ The apostles were wise to win souls. They tried the spirit of the world before us, and were despised and insulted by it. They were accounted the offscouring and filth of all things, and suffered much shame for their Lord's sake;§ but they esteemed shame, in such a cause, their highest honour. Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame for them and for us. He was buffetted, spit on, treated as a madman, a demoniac, and laughed to scorn. Let us go forth, bearing his reproach, in meekness of wisdom, instructing those who oppose, not rendering railing for railing, but pitying and praying for them; but let us be firm and unmoved, and not hesitate to speak the truth in love, whether they will

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* 2 Cor. v. 20.
† Isa. li. 7.
‡ Isa. xl. 15.
§ 1 Cor. iv. 13. Acts, v. 41.

hear, or whether they will forbear. We shall not speak wholly in vain; and to be instrumental in saving one soul from death, is an honour sufficient to compensate for all the slights and contempt we can meet with from an unkind world. It is, indeed, our duty to study to find out acceptable words, to endeavour to please men for their edification, and to be careful not to add to the unavoidable offence of the Gospel, by debasing our zeal with the unhallowed fire of an angry spirit; but degrade our character, if we appear too solicitous to conciliate the good opinion of men, or to depend upon their favour. The Lord, who employs us, will take care of us; and to live in a spirit of unreserved dependence upon him, will raise us to a noble independence with respect to creatures. All hearts are in his hands. He will protect our persons and characters, supply our wants, control our enemies, and raise us friends, so far as he sees it needful, without any solicitude on our parts, if we can but put our trust in him. Such are the principles of Christian fortitude. He who is wise to win souls, loves his fellow-creatures; but he cannot fear them, because he fears the Lord. He will neither provoke nor dread their frowns, nor will he meanly court their smiles. He knows that if they receive his message, they will love him for the truth's sake, and he neither expects nor desires their favour upon other terms. By the cross of Christ he is crucified to the world, and the world to him.* He has chosen his side. He will serve the Lord,† and he will use his utmost influence to prevail on others to serve him likewise; so far as he succeeds, he feels a joy superior to the joy of harvest, or of those who divide the spoil.‡ When he

* Gal. vi. 14. † Joshua, xxiv. 15. ‡ Isa. ix. 3.

cannot succeed, he is grieved, but not disconcerted; and for the most part, his calm but steadfast perseverance in well-doing, will gradually establish his character, stop the mouth of calumny, and extort a reverence to his person, even from those who cannot bear his doctrine.

5. I shall mention but one particular more, which, though experience shows to be not so absolutely necessary as those which I have already specified, because, in fact, it has been too little regarded by many who have been wise to win souls, yet is certainly a branch of that wisdom which, as ministers, we ought incessantly to ask of God: I mean, a due attention to the importance of union among those who are engaged in the same cause. A great stress has, indeed, been often laid upon uniformity of sentiment and modes of worship; but this, in the present state of human nature, can no more be effected either by force or persuasion, than men can be forced or persuaded to a uniformity of stature or complexion; and, if it were practicable, it might prove of little value. The form of religion may be strenuously contended for by those who are strangers to the power of it; but the best form we can conceive, if destitute of power, is lifeless, like the body without the soul. The true unity of spirit is derived from the things in which those who are taught and born of God agree, and should not be affected by those in which they differ. The church of Christ, collectively considered, is an army; they serve under one Prince, have one common interest, and are opposed by the same enemies. This army is kept up, and the places of those who are daily removed to the church triumphant, supplied entirely by those who are rescued and won from the power of the enemy, which is chiefly

effected by the Gospel ministry. This consideration should remind ministers, that it is highly improper (I might use a stronger expression) to waste much of their time and talents, which ought to be employed against the common foe, in opposing those who, though they cannot exactly agree with them in every smaller point, are perfectly agreed, and ready to concur with them in promoting their principal design. A wise statesman, who has a point much at heart, which he cannot carry without assistance, will gladly accept of help from persons of all parties on whom he can prevail to join with him; and will not. at such a crisis, preclude himself from this advantage, by an unseasonable discussion of more minute concerns, in which he knows they must and will be against him. When I see ministers of acknowledged piety and respectable abilities very busy in defending or confuting the smaller differences which already too much separate those who ought to be of one heart and one mind, though, while they are all fallible, they cannot be exactly of one judgment; though I give them credit for their good intention, I cannot but lament the misapplication of their zeal, which, if directed into another channel, would, probably, make them much more successful in winning souls. Let us sound an alarm in the enemies' camp, but not in our own! I have somewhere met with a passage of ancient history; the substance of which, though my recollection of it is but imperfect, I will relate, because I think it very applicable to this part of my subject. It is an account of two large bodies of forces which fell in with each other in a dark night. A battle immediately ensued. The attack and resistance were supported with equal spirit. The contest was fierce and bloody. Great was the slaughter on both sides, and on both sides they were on the point

of claiming the victory; when the day broke, and, as the light advanced, they soon perceived, to their astonishment and grief, that owing to the darkness of the night, they had been fighting, not with enemies as they had supposed, but with friends and allies. They had been doing their enemies' work, and weakening the cause they wished to support. The expectation of each party to conquer the other, was founded upon the losses the opponents had sustained; and this was what proportionably aggravated their lamentation and distress, when they had sufficient light to show them the mischief they had done. Ah! my friends, if shame be compatible with the heavenly state, as perhaps, in a sense, it may, (for believers, when most happy here, are most sensibly ashamed of themselves,) shall we not, even then, be ashamed to think how often, in this dark world, we mistook our friends for foes; and that, while we thought we were fighting for the cause of God and truth, we were wounding and worrying the people whom he loved; and, perhaps, indulging our own narrow, selfish, party-prejudices, under the semblance of zeal for his glory?

II. I hope what I have hitherto offered, though more directly addressed to ministers, may not be altogether uninteresting or unuseful to the rest of my auditory; but you who are not in the ministry, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, have a desire, in common with us, to win souls. And there is not only ample room and scope for your endeavours, in concert with ours, but without concurrence on your parts we can expect but little success. You, likewise, if animated by the wisdom which is from above, even those of you who are in the most confined situations, may be greatly instrumental in winning souls,

1. By your example. If you walk agreeably to your

profession, blameless and harmless as the children of God, shining as lights in the world.* When we preach a free salvation by the blood of Jesus, they who know no better, misrepresent our doctrine, as being unfavourable to the practice of morality, supposing that, by the stress we lay upon faith in his atonement, as the only solid ground of hope for acceptance with God, we encourage men to expect to be saved at last, whether they obey his commandments or not. We endeavour to convince them of this mistake, and to prove that, as without faith it is impossible to please God;† so it is no less impossible for any person to possess true faith, without earnestly endeavouring to please and obey him in all things, from principles of love and gratitude. The proof of this is easy to those who understand the Scriptures, and acknowledge their divine authority. But many, yea, most people, are more likely to be convinced by what they observe of you, than by what they hear from us. We assure them that our Gospel teaches those who receive it to renounce all ungodliness and worldly lusts; to live soberly, righteously, and godly;‡ to be temperate in prosperity, patient under affliction; to fill up their several relations in life with integrity and diligence; to be cheerfully submissive to the will of God under all changes; to be meek, gentle, and benevolent, forbearing and forgiving; in a word, to do, in all cases, to others, as we would they should do unto us.§ . Happy for us, if when we look around upon our hearers, we can with confidence say, "ye are our epistles, known and read of all men." If any ask us concerning the tendency of our doctrines, shall

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* Phil. ii. 15. ‡ Tit. ii. 12. ‖ 2 Cor. iii. 2.
† Heb. xi. 6. § Matth. vii. 12.

we send them to you, that they may notice, not only your serious and constant attendance upon public worship, but the good order of your families; your behaviour as husbands or wives, parents or children, masters or servants; your punctuality in business and to all your engagements and promises, and the tenderness you discover to the characters and concerns of your neighbours? Shall we send them to you when you are in trouble, when you are visited with sickness and strong pain, or when the desire of your eyes is taken away with a stroke,* that they may see with their own eyes and be satisfied, that you have neither followed cunningly devised fables, nor contented yourselves with mere lifeless notions of the truth; but that your religion is real and powerful, and not only inspires you with a good hope respecting a future state, but is the source of your comfort, and the spring of your conduct, in the present life? May we venture, my friends, to make this appeal? Then, undoubtedly, you are wise to win souls. A profession like yours cannot be without an influence within your own circle. Do any persons, who know your whole deportment, affect to scorn or pity you? If they treat you as hypocrites, they are hypocrites themselves; they are contradicted by their own consciences. I will not say they love you; but, be assured, they secretly reverence you. It is only the trifling half professor who hears the Gospel and talks about it, but dishonours it by his practice, whom the world really despise. And who can blame them for despising such characters? But, alas for those, who, by thus causing the ways of truth to be evil spoken of, lay stumbling-blocks before the blind!†

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* Ezek. xxiv. 16. † Levit. xix. 14.

The effects of a consistent conversation becoming the Gospel in those who profess it, were remarkably exemplified in the first Christian church at Jerusalem. They were apparently like sheep without a shepherd; sheep in the midst of wolves. They were surrounded by the very people who had lately murdered their Lord. But the holiness, love, joy, peace, union, and simplicity, which animated their conduct, impressed an awe upon the beholders, so that no poor pretender durst presume to join them;* and, though divested of all outward advantages and support, the people were constrained to magnify them. Were this spirit more general amongst us, I believe it would be more effectual to stop the mouths of gainsayers, and to silence the cavils of infidels, than all our books and sermons. And the twelve apostles, were they now living amongst us, would probably preach to little purpose, unless a measure of this spirit were discoverable in their professed admirers.

2. By your prayers. You are not called to preach the Gospel, but, in this way you may greatly assist those who are. Brethren, pray for us. Our work is great; the difficulties we have to surmount, the snares and temptations which surround us, and our infirmities, are many. Who is sufficient for these things? The apostle Paul, distinguished as he was by the eminence of his grace, experience, and services, set a high value upon the prayers of God's people. Hear how he pleads with them, with an earnestness like that of a needy beggar requesting alms, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together in your prayers to God for me;"† and pray, "that the word of the

* Acts, v. 13. † Rom. xv. 30.

Lord may have free course, may run, and be glorified."* The Lord has promised to do great things for his people, but he has said "that he will be inquired of by them, to do it for them."† Prize and improve your great privilege of access to the throne of grace, by which every believer in Jesus, like Israel of old, has power with God and with man. In answer to effectual fervent prayer, the army of Sennacherib was destroyed in a night,‡ and Peter was delivered from a strong prison, and from the malice of Herod.§ The efficacy of prayer is still the same. If the Lord were pleased to pour out a spirit of prayer and supplication upon his people, we should find our public ordinances more lively and more fruitful: *We* should then hope to be more successful in winning souls, and *you* might justly claim a principal share in the comfort and honour of seeing that good work prosper, to the success of which your prayers would largely contribute. Next to the immediate assistance and consolations of the Holy Spirit, nothing encourages a faithful minister so much, as when he thinks he can perceive that, while he is speaking, his hearers are drawing down a blessing upon his words by their prayers: it adds wings to his zeal, gives him a double impression upon his own heart, of the weight and importance of the truths he delivers; and enables him to dispense them with a double impression of demonstration and power upon the hearts of others.

3. By affording your countenance and assistance, according to the ability the Lord has given you, to promote every prudent and well-directed scheme which

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* 2 Thess. iii. 1.
† Ezek. xxxvi. 37.
‡ Isa. xxxvii. 21. 36.
§ Acts, xii. 5. 12.

is set on foot for the more effectual spreading of that knowledge which is necessary in order to win souls from the dominion of sin to the service of God. Among these there are few, if any, which I can more warrantably commend to your attention, than the laudable and benevolent object of the Society for promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor; an institution which it has pleased God signally to prosper, both by the large increase of their fund from year to year, and the many instances of the known happy effects which have followed the perusal of the books they have distributed. Many more instances, as yet unknown to us, we trust will be manifested in the great day, when the Lord shall appear in glory. Though the beginning of this society was small, they have, since the year 1750, when it was first formed, distributed more than four hundred thousand books, upwards of one hundred and five thousand of which were Bibles and New Testaments; the rest were small and plain books, well adapted to the capacities and circumstances of those who have, mostly, but a confined education, and who have not much time for reading. The number of books bestowed annually has been on the increase from year to year. In the course of the last year, according to the printed account, the number of all the different books was fifteen thousand five hundred and eighty. How much these donations may have multiplied the means of religious knowledge among people otherwise destitute, in these kingdoms, in our Plantations, and in America, who can say, who can even conjecture? And we hope, by the benefactions of this year, the Society will be able to do more the following year than in any former.

People who are in danger of perishing for lack of knowledge, are still very numerous. The much which

has been done, is little, compared with what the Society might yet do, were their resources equal to their wishes. I trust my request, that you will strengthen their hands at this time will not be in vain: and that the brief account I have given you of their design and progress, will render further solicitation needless. To bespeak the benevolence of my stated congregation, when a collection is proposed, I seldom do more than inform them of the occasion, and that it has my good wishes. After the repeated proofs I have had of their generosity, I need do no more. Nor will I suppose that it is necessary to use any further arguments to prevail with you.

There may be some persons present who will kindly assist us in procuring the means of religious knowledge for others, who are hitherto unacquainted with the power and the comforts of religion themselves. May the good Lord now awaken their desires to obtain the one thing needful, the pearl of great price! That knowledge which is necessary for the poor, is equally so for you, whatever your situation in life may be. Will you pity others, and not feel a concern for your own case? You may deserve thanks from us for your ready assistance in this good work, and yet your heart may be in a state of alienation from God; you may have amiable qualifications, which entitle you to the esteem of your fellow-creatures, as you are members of society, and be, at the same time, destitute of the faith and hope of the Gospel. Permit me, before we part, to offer one consideration to your serious thought. We read that eight persons only were saved in the ark;* and only four of these, Noah and his three sons, were

* 1 Pet. iii. 20.

men. Considering the large dimensions of the ark, I think we may take it for granted that Noah and his sons did not build it without assistance; and there were no men to assist them in escaping from the flood, but such as afterwards perished in it. What an awful case! To afford their help to build an ark for the preservation of others, and then to remain out of the ark themselves, until the flood came and swept them all away. There is a day of wrath approaching. It will burn like an oven; it will ravage like a flood. The Gospel points out a refuge. The believer in Jesus Christ, like Noah in the ark, is in perfect safety. He is already delivered from condemnation, and shall stand before the Lord in humble confidence, when he shall come to judge the world. Your concurrence in this charitable design of distributing Bibles among the poor, that they may be timely warned to flee from the wrath to come, is commendable: thus you assist in preparing an ark for them; the very book or books which your money will purchase, may be blessed to the saving of souls, and consequently you may be the instrument. Can you bear the thought of being instrumental to the salvation of others, and to lose your own soul, and be yourself a cast-away at last, after all the means and opportunities you have been favoured with; after all the warnings and calls you have had; after all the good you may have done as a member of society?—Alas! is it possible that you can believe there is a flood coming, and that an ark is prepared, and not flee, instantly flee, for refuge, to the hope set before you? Oh! may the Lord make you truly wise, and effectually win your soul to himself.

Brethren, the wisdom spoken of in my text is very different from the wisdom of this world, which knows

not God. But the Scripture cannot be broken; let us therefore abide by the sure decision of that *word* which cannot deceive or disappoint us. They are truly wise who are wise to win souls; and though they may be now obscured by misrepresentations and reproaches—they shall shine, ere long, as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever.*

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* Dan. xii. 3.

THE GREAT ADVENT.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

On April 23, 1789.

THE DAY OF GENERAL THANKSGIVING FOR THE KING'S HAPPY RECOVERY.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation. PSALM xci. 15, 16.

———temporis illius
Me consolor imagine:
Festis quum populus me reducem choris
Faustisque excipiet vocibus, et Dei,
Pompa cum celebri, me comitabitur
Augusta ad penetralia.

BUCHANAN, PSALM xlii.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1789.]

TO THE READER.

The manifest interposition of Almighty God in favour of these kingdoms, has seldom, if ever, been more signally displayed, or more generally acknowledged by persons of every rank, party, or description, than in the late memorable and important event of the King's happy recovery. If so interesting a subject should give occasion to the publication of more thanksgiving sermons than usual, it will likewise suggest a sufficient apology for them. Considered as testimonies of loyalty to the King, and of gratitude to Him by whom Kings reign, they can scarcely be too numerous.

THE GREAT ADVENT.

1 Thessalonians, iv. 16, 17.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Our beloved King is now on his way, amidst the acclamations of an affectionate people, to St. Paul's Cathedral: there he will, this day, make his public acknowledgment to God, who heard his prayer in the time of trouble. It will be a joyful sight to thousands; and, perhaps, there is not a person in this assembly who has not felt a desire to be one of the spectators. But I am glad to meet you here. Many of you, I doubt not, earnestly and repeatedly prayed for the recovery of our gracious Sovereign; and you judge with me, that the most proper expression of our gratitude and joy, is to unite in rendering praise to God upon the very spot where we have often presented our united prayers. And I infer, from the largeness of the congregation, that few who statedly worship with us are now absent; those excepted, who, residing in or near the line of procession, could not attend with propriety, nor perhaps with safety.

If He, in whose name we are met, shall be pleased (as his word encourages us to hope) to favour us with the influence of his Holy Spirit, and to enable us, in the exercise of that faith which gives subsistence and

evidence to things as yet future and unseen, to realize the subject of my text to our minds; we shall have no reason to regret our coming together upon this occasion.

The immediate design of the apostle in these words, is to comfort believers under a trial, which some of you perhaps feel at this hour, and to which any of us may be called sooner than we are aware, the removal of our Christian friends or relatives, with whom we have often taken sweet counsel, to a better world. Such a stroke, whenever it takes place, will awaken painful sensations, which he who knows our frame does not condemn. The tendency of the Gospel is to moderate and regulate, but not to stifle or eradicate, the feelings of humanity. We may sorrow, but provision is made that we should not sorrow like those who have no hope; "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."* It is but a temporary separation; we shall see them again to unspeakable advantage; "for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him." The change of expression here is observable; "Jesus died." Death to him was death indeed: death in all its horrors: but he died for his people, to disarm death of its sting, to throw a light upon the dark passage to the grave, and to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. For now, they "that believe in him shall never die."† He so dispels their fears, and enlivens their hopes, that to them death is no more than a sleep; they sleep in Jesus, and are blessed. And when He, "who is their life, "shall appear," as he certainly will, and every eye shall see him, "they also shall appear with him in

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* Rev. xiv. 13. † John, xi. 26.

glory."* "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

But I think I am warranted to consider the text in a more general view, and to accommodate it to the happy event which demands our especial thankfulness and praise on this day. Let our thoughts rise from the King's splendid, though solemn, procession to St. Paul's, to contemplate that great advent of the King of kings, the idea of which filled and fired the apostles' thoughts. "Behold! he cometh in the clouds!"† He cometh in his own glory, in the glory of his Father, with all his angels, and with all his saints!‡

If I attempt to illustrate the procession (so to speak) of that great day, for which all other days were made, by the most striking circumstances of the present day, it will, indeed, be comparing great things with small. In some respects, comparison will utterly fail, and I must have recourse to contrast. For what proportion can there be between finite and infinite; between the most important concerns of time, and those of eternity?

Let us, however, aim to fix our feeble conceptions upon the Personage whose approach is here announced; upon the manner of his coming; upon his train of attendants; and upon the final event of his appearance, with which the scene will close.

"The Lord *Himself* shall descend." At another time, if both houses of parliament, the judges, the foreign ministers, the principal part of the nobility and persons of distinction in the nation, were to assemble in St. Paul's, their presence would form a grand and affecting

* Col. iii. 4. † Rev. i. 7. ‡ Matth. xxv. 31. 1 Thess. iii. 13.

spectacle. But upon this occasion, though they should be all there. if the King was not seen among them, it is probable they would be all in a manner overlooked; and disappointment and anxiety would mark the countenance of every beholder. But it is more than probable, it is absolutely certain, that if all the glories of the invisible world were to open upon the view of those who feel their obligations to the Great Redeemer, they could not be completely happy, unless they were permitted to behold his glory. He has stipulated on their behalf, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, should be with me where I am;"* and by his grace he qualifies them for their high privilege; so that even now they can say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee."† Jesus is the light, the life, the sun of the soul that knows him according to the revelation given in the Scriptures of his person, offices, and grace. And, as the most magnificent palace would be but a dungeon, if it had no apertures to admit the light; so the whole creation would be dark and dreary to his people, were it possible that they could be excluded from his presence.

In this life they can know but little of the particulars of that happiness which God has prepared for them that love him; but in general they know, and this suffices them, that they shall see him as he is, and shall be like him, and with him.‡ They love him unseen, and while he is yet absent from them, the expectation, founded upon his own gracious promise, that he will shortly descend *himself*, to receive them, and to avow them for his own, before the assembled world, is the

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* John, xvii. 24. † Psalm lxxiii. 25. ‡ 1 John, iii. 2.

food and joy of their hearts, which soothes their sorrows, and animates them under every difficulty they are exposed to, at present, for his sake.

Oh! the solemnity, the terrors, and the glories of that approaching day! Then they who have slighted his mercy, and abused his patience and forbearance, will tremble. Then many whom the world has admired or envied, many of "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men," shall call (alas! in vain) to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from his presence.* But they who love him and long for his appearance, will say, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!"† May we, my brethren, have grace to use all diligence, that we "may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless."‡

Should we be asked, Why does every face express an air of satisfaction to-day? Why is the feeling of our own personal trials in a degree suspended? Why does the public appearance of the King diffuse so general a joy among his loyal subjects? We can give a ready answer; We love our King. Few of us, indeed, are personally known to him. The blessing of being under a good King, can only be known to the bulk of a nation by the influence of his administration upon the public welfare. This influence we have felt. It is true, we were too little sensible of it, too little thankful for it, until an alarming dispensation awakened our fears, lest we should lose the privileges we had not sufficiently prized; but then each man would remind himself how highly favoured we had been, as a people,

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* Rev. vi. 15, 16. † Isa. xxv. 9. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 14.

for many years under his government; then we understood our great obligations to the King as the minister of God to us for good. We were sitting peaceably under our own vines and fig-trees, highly distinguished among the nations, by our civil and religious liberty, our prosperity at home, and our reputation abroad. The news of the King's illness, therefore, not only awakened our apprehensions, but revived our gratitude; and from the same principle we now rejoice in his recovery.

Again; because we loved him we sympathized with him. We were afflicted by his affliction. We not only considered him as a King, but we felt for him as a man, a husband, a father. Such an instance of the dependent, precarious state of human life; such a proof, that no rank or situation is exempted from a share in the calamities which sin has brought into the world, impressed us with compassion blended with awe. And not our compassion only, but our prayers, were engaged for the King, the Queen, and Royal Family. I am persuaded many persons could scarcely have prayed more earnestly, had it been their own private and domestic concern. Our prayers have been heard, and signally answered, therefore we rejoice and give thanks to-day. We wish not to detract from the skill of physicians; they have been employed and owned as instruments of the merciful will of God; but we ascribe the praise for a recovery, so little hoped for, and so critically seasonable, to Him who raiseth the dead, who speaks and it is done.

And we rejoice in expectation. Indeed, in this view we may, and should, "rejoice with trembling."* How

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* Psalm ii. 11.

much may depend upon this single, this precious life, we know not; neither do we know what might have been the consequences, if the rumour, at which we once shuddered, and which, for some hours, was generally believed, that God had taken him from us, had proved true.

Let us praise God, who has preserved us from knowing them. But the manner in which we have been relieved, encourages us both to pray and to hope, that our King is an object of God's especial care, and that he will live (long may he live!) to communicate still greater benefits to the nation, as the patron of true religion, the guardian of our constitution, and an exemplar of piety and virtue to his subjects: that God may give him to reign in the hearts of an enlightened, free, and affectionate people, and not permit any device or weapon formed against him to prosper.

For similar reasons, but vastly superior in importance, even as the heavens are higher than the earth, we rejoice in the assurance and prospect, that the Lord himself will descend. He is "the good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep;"* and, therefore, they who know his name, and trust in him for salvation, are bound to him by the strongest ties of attachment and gratitude. They admire his condescension and his love. To his mediation and care they are indebted for his life and hopes. They remember what they were doing, and how carelessly they were sporting in the path that leadeth to destruction, when he first stopped them, turned them, and led them into his fold. He is, even now, their sun and shield, their wisdom and strength; on him they cast their cares, from

* John, x. 11.

him they receive their supplies; therefore they love him, though unseen,* and rejoice in the hope of his appearance.

They know that he who will descend to receive them was once a man of sorrows and a companion of grief. And though this too little affected them in the time of their ignorance, it has been otherwise since they have derived life from his death, and healing from his wounds. They have sympathized with him in the agonies which he endured, in Gethsemane, and upon Mount Golgotha. They remember that his face was defiled with spitting, his head crowned with thorns, his back torn by scourges, his hands and feet pierced with spikes; that he made his soul an offering for their sins, and was crucified for their sakes. Thus "he loved them, and gave himself for them."† Thus he delivered them from approaching wrath; and this love has won their hearts. And they are waiting his return from heaven;‡ that when they shall see him as he is, with all his angels, and with all his saints, they may join in nobler strains than they can at present reach, in songs of praise to Him who redeemed them to God by his own blood.

But though they have much to praise him for in this life, they have much more to expect when he shall descend. Their privileges are great while here. They are already delivered from guilt and condemnation; they have access by him to a throne of grace; they have fellowship with him by faith, and joys which a stranger intermeddles not with—"But it does not yet appear "what they shall be."§—They are still in a state of warfare and trial; they are exposed to many troubles, to reproach, opposition, and temptation; they

* 1 Pet. i. 8.
† Gal. ii. 20.
‡ 1 Cor. i. 7.
§ 1 John, iii. 2.

are still straitened and hindered, in their best attempts and desires, by an indwelling principle of evil. They are sowing in tears; but when their Lord shall descend, they expect to reap with joy.* He is coming to wipe away all their tears, and then they are assured they shall weep no more. The days of their mourning shall cease for ever. He has prepared for them a kingdom, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."† In that kingdom they shall shine forth, each like the sun‡ in the firmament, an immense constellation of suns!

The manner in which the Lord will descend, can be but faintly illustrated by any circumstances borrowed from the pomp of this day. When the King enters St. Paul's, his arrival will be announced by the voice of the multitude, the discharge of cannon, and the deep-mouthed organ. But what are these, when compared with the voice of the archangel, the shout of all who love his appearance, and that trump of God which will shake the creation and raise the dead? Perhaps, by the word *archangel*, in this connexion, we may understand, the Lord of angels, the King himself. "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people."§ "The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God."‖ The *shout* seems a military term. By a shout, soldiers encourage each other in the onset to battle; and there is a triumphant shout of victory when the enemy is utterly defeated. Such will be the shout when the Lord shall descend. His soldiers, who, fighting in his cause, have often endured hardship, and have sometimes lost

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* Psalm cxxvi. 5. ‡ Matth. xiii. 43. ‖ John, v. 25.
† 1 Pet. i. 4. § Psalm l. 4.

a skirmish, shall, on the great day of decision, in the final event of the war, stand forth "more than conquerors, through him that loved them."* Their shout shall proclaim his praise: "For they got not the victory by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them."† The Lord leads them on, teaches them to fight, clothes them with complete armour, and supplies them with strength. He himself subdues their foes; and when he shall descend with glory, he will terminate the contest. His people will then utter a universal shout, and shall hear the noise of war no more.

When the Lord descended upon mount Sinai, the trumpet of God was heard exceeding loud,‡ it waxed louder and louder; the people trembled, and Moses spoke. The apostle records his words. Even Moses, the favoured servant of God, said, "I exceedingly fear and quake."§ But the sound of the last trump, when the Lord shall descend again, will be much louder, and the effects much more important and extensive. It will be heard not only in the neighbourhood of one mountain, but from east to west, from pole to pole; not only by the living, but by the dead; by all who ever lived.

Then, at his great command, they that dwell in the dust shall awake.‖ The earth and the sea shall deliver up their dead. There will be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust. Some shall arise "to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."**

The joy, this day, for the recovery and appearance of our King, is general, I hope universal. I hope

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* Rom. viii. 37. ‡ Exod. xix. 16—19. ‖ Isa. xxvi. 19.
† Psalm xliv. 3. § Heb. xii. 21. ** Dan. xii. 3.

there are few persons in the kingdom who do not cordially share in it. However, if contrary sensations do exist, they are suppressed and concealed. But the Great King has borne with many avowed enemies, and with many traitors disguised under the profession of his name, from age to age. He will not bear with them always. He knows them all, and not one of them can escape his notice. To them the language of the trump will be, "Arise, and come to judgment!" My heart is pained to think, that, possibly, some of this description may be now present in our assembly. Yet I am glad you are here, that I may warn you to flee from the wrath to come. What a dreadful day will it be, when you, if unhumbled, unpardoned, unsanctified, as you now are, shall be compelled to stand before his tribunal! For we are assured, that when he returns to bless his willing people, he will summon his enemies, who would not that he should reign over them.* He will place them at his left hand, and denounce that awful sentence upon them, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."† As yet he is upon a mercy-seat. Oh! "seek him while he may be found; call upon him while he is near!"‡ There is forgiveness with him. Humble yourselves before him, and entreat for mercy. Entreat him to show you who he is, and what he has done for sinners; that you may believe and be saved. Otherwise you must stand before his judgment-seat. Then his wrath will burn like fire.

But it is of the dead in Christ I am chiefly to speak. These shall rise first, and, together with those of his servants who shall be living at his coming, shall be caught up, to meet him in the air. There are expres-

* Luke, xix. 27. † Matth. xxv. 41. ‡ Isa. lv. 6.

sions in Scripture which intimate, that the servants of the Lord Christ shall have the honour of being, in some manner beyond our feeble apprehension, assessors with their Lord in the day of judgment.* They will witness and approve his proceedings. In this state of infirmity, it becomes them, and is their duty, to pity and pray for the wicked, and to use all their influence to persuade them to pity themselves, to forsake their evil ways, that they may live. But in the great and terrible day, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, the righteous will be so perfectly impressed with the justice and holiness of the sentence of condemnation, that they will not hesitate to say, "Amen: So let thine enemies perish, O Lord!"†

But the apostle, using the language of prophecy which speaks of the future as though it were actually present, says, further, "Then we that are alive, and remain, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." Not, as I apprehend, that he expected to be living when the Lord shall descend; by the word *we*, he expresses his joint relation with the many members which constitute the one body, of which the Lord Christ is the head. Of these, there will be some living when he shall appear. And of these, he says elsewhere, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump."‡ They will not suffer that separation of soul and body which we call death. But as mortal flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, He will change their vile bodies, according to the pattern of his glorious body,§ and they, like Enoch and Elijah of old,

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* Luke, xxii. 30. 1 Cor. vi. 3.
† Judges, v. 31.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.
§ Phil. iii. 21.

shall ascend, together with those who are raised from the dead, to meet him in the air.

These will constitute his train. The redeemed from the earth; they who lived and died in the faith of his name, through a course of successive generations; and they who shall be alive at his coming, shall be all collected together, and prepared to welcome Him.

Of the numbers who will rejoice to see the King today, many, though loyal subjects, will only behold him at a distance; and the far greater part of his people will not behold him at all. Few but the nobility and principal persons can gain admission into the church; though the crowds in the street will participate in the general satisfaction. Could we suppose that, instead of the common people, the streets were filled, and the windows lined by the great; that all the sovereigns, potentates and illustrious personages in Europe, were assembled, to be spectators of the joyful event which now calls for our thanksgivings; splendid as the concourse might appear in the eyes of men, they would be unspeakably inferior, in rank and dignity, to those who shall meet the Lord. Not one of his people will be absent; and, however poor and unnoticed many of them once were, they will then, every one, be greater than the kings of the earth. They will all claim the title, and the claim will be allowed, of "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."* They will all possess "that honour which cometh of God only."† The glorious company of apostles, the goodly fellowship of prophets, the noble army of martyrs, will march in the procession; and, besides these, an exceeding great multitude, which no man can number, whose exaltation and hap-

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* 2 Cor. vi. 18. † John, v. 44.

piness are but imperfectly represented to us by images borrowed from the things which are deemed most valuable and honourable amongst men. They are said to be clothed with white robes, to have crowns upon their heads, to be furnished with harps, and to bear palms (the emblem of victory) in their hands.*

"Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."† May grace preserve you from being ashamed of your Lord now, and you will not be ashamed of Him, nor will he be ashamed of you, when he shall come to judge the world.‡

When all mankind shall be ranged before this Great Judge, he will own and vindicate his people in the presence of assembled worlds, and pass an irrevocable sentence of exclusion and condemnation upon his enemies; and then, he will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;"§ then he will present them "before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy;"‖ then time shall be no more;** they will no longer measure their existence by the revolutions of the sun and the moon; they will enter upon an eternal state. With this event the apostle closes the description in my text. Here he stops—the rest is too great for language to express, or thought to conceive. He can only say, "and so we shall for ever be with the Lord." Who can expound this sentence? We must leave this world, and be admitted into the inheritance of saints in light, before we can fully understand the import of these few words.

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* Rev. iv. 10. vii. 9.
† Luke, xii. 32.
‡ Matth. x. 32. Mark, viii. 33.
§ Matth. xxv. 34.
‖ Jude, 24.
** Rev. x. 6.

We shall be with the Lord. There is no doubt, that if the power of our King were equal to the benevolence of his heart, he would willingly make all who shall see him to-day, yea, all his subjects, in every part of his dominions, completely happy. But can he take them all with him to court? Can he treat them all as his own children? Can he invest them all with dignities and possessions equal to the largest desires of their hearts? Could we, for a moment, conceive it possible for an earthy king to do thus, still it would afford but a very faint illustration of our subject. The highest effects of his favour would be precarious and transient, confined to the term of a short life, and, in their nature, incapable of answering the instinctive appetite of the soul of man, formed for immortality, and endued with a capacity for good, which nothing less than being with the Lord can satisfy.

When Peter saw his Saviour transfigured upon the mount, a glance of his glory instantly fixed and filled his mind. He forgot all inferior attachments, and said, "it is good to be here."* He would have been glad to build tabernacles upon the mount, and to return to the world no more. He knew not, indeed, what he said; there was much for him yet to do and to suffer for his Master; but he well knew why he said it: and all who are partakers of the grace of God are like-minded with Peter. And though at present they walk by faith, and not by sight,† they are sometimes favoured with seasons of refreshment, with golden hours, when, according to his gracious promise, he manifests himself unto them, as he does not unto the world,‡ and causes his goodness to pass before them: then, for the time, they

* Matth. xvii. 4. † 2 Cor. v. 7. ‡ John, xiv. 22.

are raised above both the cares and the comforts of this world, and could be glad to remain with him. But, like Peter, they must return to fill up the duties of their situation in life, till his appointed hour of dismission. However, these foretastes convince them that they cannot be properly happy till they are with him in his kingdom, where nothing will conceal him for a moment from their view.

Their nearest approaches to him now are likewise subject to abatements. Something from within or from without still occurs to interrupt, and too often to suspend their joys. Their communion with him is indistinct, through the medium of ordinances, and a veil of flesh and blood. This veil hinders them, not only as it is polluted, but as it is weak, and subject to many infirmities. We cannot see him as yet, and live.* If he did not accommodate the discoveries of himself to the frailty of our nature, we should be overpowered. The beloved disciple had often conversed familiarly with his Lord, and reclined on his bosom during his state of humiliation; but when he appeared in the Isle of Patmos, though his majesty was attempered with mildness and love, and his design was to honour and comfort him, he says, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."†

Further: pain, indisposition, and trouble, often distract their attention, or detain them from the opportunities in which he has promised to meet his people. They are glad when it is said unto them, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord;"‡ but they are frequently shut up, and cannot come forth:§ and though

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* Exod. xxxiii. 20.
† Rev. i. 17.
‡ Psalm cxxii. 1.
§ Psalm lxxxviii. 8.

he supports them under all their afflictions, yet it is no small trial to be confined from his ordinances. But when they shall meet their Lord in the air, they will be freed from every defect, defilement, and impediment. They will see Him as he is, without any interposing veil or cloud. They will be out of the reach of sin, temptation, pain, and grief. They are blessed now, though often called to mourn, because they will then be comforted.*

Again: we shall be for ever with the Lord. Oh! that word *for ever!* Even to be with the Lord, and to possess a happiness commensurate to the utmost grasp of our capacity, if it were only for a month, or a year, or an age, or a thousand ages—the thought that this happiness must at length have an end, however distant the termination might be, would cast a damp upon the whole enjoyment. But to know that the happiness is eternal, that they who are once with the Lord, shall be with him for ever; this is, if I may so speak, the heaven of heaven itself. Such honour awaits all the saints: for thus hath the Amen, the faithful and true witness, already declared, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the house of my God, and he shall go no more out:"† "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."‡

I hope I have not digressed from the design of this day, by attempting to lead your thoughts to the day of the Lord. I have availed myself of every occasion which my views of the text have suggested, to impress upon your hearts, and my own, a sense of the very

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* Matth. v. 4. † Rev. iii. 12. ‡ Isa. lx. 20.

great mercy which God, in answer to prayer, has bestowed upon us, by restoring health to the King, and enabling him to pay his public acknowledgment to the Most High, and to revisit his affectionate people. But never are our temporal mercies so sweet, so valuable, nor so likely to be permanent, as when they are thankfully contemplated in immediate connexion with the hand of Him by whom kings reign, and, "who doth what pleaseth him, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."* Nay, to us, who are soon to pass into an eternal state, the most important concerns of nations and kingdoms are, in reality, trivial as the sports of children, unless we can acknowledge, trace, approve, and admire, the great and ultimate designs of God, to which all the revolutions that take place in human affairs are subordinate and subservient.

His wise and holy providence ruleth over all; and every movement has either a more remote or a more direct tendency to bring forward the glories of that day, when the Lord himself shall descend to receive his own people, and to execute vengeance upon his adversaries.

Knowing to whom I am preaching, I have not thought it necessary to offer proof, that the God who has restored health to the King, and happiness to the kingdom, is he to whom my text refers, He, of whom we say in our public Liturgy, "We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge." It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners. We rest in his own declaration, unmoved by all the cavils of those who, alas! know him not, that all things "are delivered unto him, all power com-

* Dan. iv. 35.

mitted to him, in heaven and earth."* How else could we trust to him for the expiation of our sins and the salvation of our souls, guilty and helpless as we are in ourselves, and conscious of the snares, difficulties, dangers, and enemies to which we are exposed? "The Lord reigneth."† "He is King of saints, King of the nations, King and Lord of the universe." "The government is upon his shoulders."‡ This God is the God we adore, and we now aim to imitate the songs of those with whom we shortly hope to join: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."§

While I exhort you to rejoice, and join with you in rejoicing, for the late instance of his goodness to the King, to the nation, and to ourselves, I feel the highest pleasure in the thought, that I see many around me, (Oh! that I could hope the same of you all,) to whom I may warrantably say, Rejoice on these accounts; but rather, especially, and above all, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven,"‖ and that the Lord whom you love, and who now guides you by his counsel, will shortly descend to receive you to his glory.**

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* Matth. xi. 27. xxviii. 18.
† Psalm xcix. 1.
‡ Isa. ix. 6.
§ Rev. v. 12.
‖ Luke, x. 20.
** Psalm lxxiii. 24.

A HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

FOR

THE KING'S HAPPY RECOVERY.

I.

Man can seldom prize the blessings
Which our gracious God bestows,
In the moment of possessing;
Or return the praise he owes.
But, with other eyes he views them
In affliction's threatening days;
When he fears, lest he should lose them,
Then he trembles, weeps, and prays.

II.

Comets or eclipses wake him,
For a moment fix his eye,
Hurricanes or earthquakes shake him,
And extort an anxious cry;
While the sun, with gentle motion,
Spreading blessings through the year,
Causes no devout emotion,
Neither gratitude nor fear.

III.

God, in mercy to this nation,
Has afforded us a king,
Whose benign administration
Cheer'd us like the sun in spring.
Truth and liberty were nourish'd
By his mild auspicious rays:
Thus, in peace, the kingdom flourish'd;
But our hearts forgot to praise.

IV.

When a dark eclipse succeeded,
Fear a thousand ills surmis'd ;
Then we felt how much we needed
What we had too little prized :
Then we pray'd, and since have proved
Fervent prayer is not in vain ;
Prayer the dark eclipse removed,
And our sun shines bright again.

V.

Lord ! to thee, the Great Physician,
We our hearts and voices raise !
Thou didst answer our petition,
Now accept our humble praise !
Bless our king, Almighty Saviour !
May he long the sceptre wield,
For our good, and with thy favour,
Thou, his Wisdom, Strength, and Shield !

THE

IMMINENT DANGER AND THE ONLY SURE RESOURCE OF THIS NATION:

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

On Friday, February 28, 1794.

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL FAST.

Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.—HOSEA, vi. 1.

In publico discrimine, omnis homo miles est.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1794.]

THE DANGER AND RESOURCE OF THIS NATION.

JONAH, iii. 9.

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ?

How great is the power of God over the hearts of men! Nineveh was the capital of a powerful empire. The inhabitants were Heathens. The many prophets who, during a long series of years, had spoken in the name of the Lord to his professed people of Judah and Israel, had spoken almost in vain. The messengers were often mocked, and their message despised. The inhabitants of Nineveh, it is probable, had never seen a true prophet till Jonah was sent to them. If they had reasoned on his prediction, they might have thought it very improbable, that a great city, the head of a great kingdom, and in a time of peace, could be in danger of an overthrow within forty days. But it is said, "they believed God."* The awful denunciation made a general, a universal impression. The king arose from his throne, laid aside his robes, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. A sudden cessation of business and of pleasure took place; he proclaimed a strict fast, the rigour of which was extended even to the cattle. His subjects readily complied, and unanimously concurred in crying for mercy; though they had no encouragement but a peradventure, "Who can tell if

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* Verse 5.

God will turn and repent, and turn from the fierceness of his anger, that we perish not?"

It appears, from this, and other passages of Scripture, that the most express declarations of God's displeasure against sinners, still afford ground and room for repentance. Thus, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die;"* and again, in the prophecy of Jeremiah, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."† The Lord God speaks to us by his word, in plain and popular language. He condescends to our feeble apprehensions. God cannot repent, he is of one mind, who can turn him?‡ Yet when afflictive providences lead men to a sense of their sins, to an acknowledgment of their demerits, and excite a spirit of humiliation, repentance, and prayer, he often mercifully changes his dispensations, and averts from them the impending evil. Such was the effect of Jonah's message to the Ninevites. The people humbled themselves, and repented of their wickedness; and God suspended the execution of the sentence which he had pronounced against them.

My brethren, may we not fear that the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us,§ if we do no imitate their example, and humble ourselves before God? They repented at the

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* Ezek. xxxiii. 14, 15.
† Jer. xviii. 7, 8.
‡ Numb. xxiii. 19. Job, xxiii. 13.
§ Matth. xii. 41.

preaching of Jonah, and immediately, on their first hearing him; and they sought for mercy upon a peradventure, when they could say no more than, Who can tell, whether there may be the least room to hope for it, after what the prophet has so solemnly declared?

God does not speak to us by the audible voice of an inspired prophet; nor is it necessary. We know, or may know, from his written word, that it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked.* The appearance of an angel from heaven could add nothing to the certainty of the declarations he has already put into our hands. He has likewise raised up, and perpetuated a succession of his ministers, to enforce the warnings he has given us in the Scripture; to remind us of our sins, and the sure and dreadful consequences, if we persist in them. Nor are we left at an uncertainty as to the event, if we humbly confess them, and implore forgiveness, in the way which he has prescribed. The Gospel, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, is preached unto us. Jesus Christ as crucified is set forth among us.† His blood cleanseth from all sin; and they who believe in him are freed from condemnation, and completely justified. They have also free access to a throne of grace; and, like Israel, they have power, by prayer, to prevail with God and with man.‡ And shall it be said of any of us, that the Lord gave us space to repent, and invited us to repentance, and we repented not?§ May his mercy forbid it!

He now speaks to us by his providence. His judg-

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* Isa. iii. 10, 11.
† Gal. iii. 1. 1 John, i. 7. Rom. viii. 1. Acts, xiii. 39.
‡ Gen. xxxii. 28. § Rev. ii. 21.

ments are abroad in the earth; and it behoves us to learn righteousness.* His hand is lifted up, and if any are so careless, or obstinate, that they will not see, yet, sooner or later, they must, they shall see. The great God has a controversy with the potsherds of the earth. The point to be decided between him and many abroad, and, I fear, too many at home, is, whether he be the Governor of the earth or not? His own people, to whom his name and glory are dear, will hold all inferior concernments in subordination to this. If there be no other alternative, misery and havock must spread, men must perish by millions, yea, the frame of nature must be dissolved, rather than God be dishonoured and defied with impunity. But he will surely plead and gain his own cause, and, either in a way of judgment or of mercy, all men shall know that he is the Lord. I believe there is no expression in the Old Testament so frequently repeated as this, "Ye," or they, "shall know that I am the Lord! Hath he said it, and shall he not make it good?"†

The rivers of human blood, and all the calamities and horrors which overspread a great part of the Continent, the distant report of which is sufficient to make our ears tingle, are all to be ascribed to this cause. God is not acknowledged; yea, in some places, he has been formally disowned and renounced. Therefore men are left to themselves, their furious passions are unchained, and they are given up, without restraint, to the way of their own hearts. A more dreadful judgment than this cannot be inflicted on this side of hell.

And though we are still favoured with peace at home, the dreadful storm is at no great distance; it seems

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* Isa. xxvi. 9. 11. † Ezekiel, *passim.*

moving our way, and we have reason to fear it may burst upon us. But I would be thankful for the appointment of this day; for I should think the prospect dark indeed, if I did not rely on the Lord's gracious attention to the united prayers of those who fear and trust him, and who know it is equally easy to him either to save or to destroy, by many or by few.* Our fleets and armies may be well appointed and well commanded; but, without his blessing upon our councils and enterprises, they will be unable to defend us. He can take wisdom from the wise, and courage from the bold, in the moment when they are most needful. He can disable our forces by sickness or dissention. And by his mighty wind, he can dash our ships to pieces against the rocks, against each other, or sink them as lead in the mighty waters. "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth not?"†

Our Lord and Saviour, when speaking of the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, said to the Jews, "Think ye that these men were sinners, above all that dwelt in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."‡ May the application of these words sink deeply into our hearts! It will not become us to say, either to God or man, that we have indeed sinned, but there are greater sinners than ourselves. It is true, the French Convention, and many others who are infatuated by the same spirit, have exceeded the ordinary standard of human impiety and cruelty. But I hope there are multitudes in that nation, who, though they are overawed by their

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* 1 Sam. xiv. 6. † Lam. iii. 37. ‡ Luke, xiii. 4, 5.

oppressors, and dare not speak their sentiments, yet are mourning in secrecy and silence for the abominations which they cannot prevent. But the French have not sinned against such advantages as we possess. They were long the slaves of arbitrary power, and the dupes of superstition; and of late they have been the dupes of madmen assuming the name of philosophers. We, on the contrary, were born and educated in a land distinguished from all the nations of the earth, by the eminent degree in which we enjoy civil and religious liberty, and the light of Gospel truth. These privileges exceedingly aggravate our sins; and no just comparison, in this respect, can be formed between us and other nations, until we can find a people who have been equally favoured, and for an equal space of time, by the providence of God, and have likewise equalled us in disobedience and ingratitude.

The most dreadful enormities committed in France, are no more than specimens of what human depravity is capable of, when circumstances admit of its full exertion, and when the usual boundaries and restrictions necessary to the peace and welfare of civil society are judicially removed. The influence of daring infidelity and profligate example, aided by the peculiar state of their public affairs, have broken, in many instances, the strongest ties of social and relative life, and extinguished the common feelings of humanity.

Yet the unhappy French, though our inveterate enemies, are not the proper objects of our hatred or our scorn, but rather of our pity. They know not what they do. Let us pray for them. Who can tell but God, to whom all things are possible, and whose mercies are higher than the heavens, may give them also repentance? And let us pray for ourselves, that we may be

instructed and warned by their history; for, by nature, we are no better than they.

I. But it is time to attend more immediately to our own concerns. The professed purpose of our meeting to-day, is to "humble ourselves before Almighty God, and to send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty, for obtaining pardon of our sins, and for averting those heavy judgments which our manifold provocations have most justly deserved; and imploring his blessing and assistance on the arms of his Majesty by sea and land, and for restoring and perpetuating peace, safety, and prosperity to himself and to his kingdoms."* I hope these expressions accord with the language and desire of our hearts.

And now—Oh! for a glance of what Isaiah saw, and has described!† Oh! that we, by the power of that faith which is the evidence of things unseen, could behold the glory of the Lord filling this house; that we could realize the presence and the attitude of his attendant angels! They cover their faces and their feet with their wings, as overpowered by the beams of his majesty, and conscious, if not of defilement like us, yet of unavoidable inability, as creatures, to render him the whole of that praise and homage which are justly due to him. Oh! that by faith, we could enter into the spirit of their ascription—Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is filled with his glory! If we were all thus affected, as the prophet was, surely each one, for himself, would adopt the prophet's language. Or if a comfortable hope in the Gospel prevented us from crying out, "Wo is me, I am undone!" we should, at least, say (the Hebrew word might be so

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* Title page of the appointed Form of Prayer. † Isa. vi.

rendered) I am silenced, I am struck dumb! I am overwhelmed with confusion and shame; for I am a man of unclean lips myself, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

If we have a degree of this impression, we shall not be at leisure to perplex ourselves concerning men or measures, the second causes, or immediate instruments of our calamities. The evil of sin, contrasted with the holiness and glory of God, will engross our thoughts. And we shall ascribe all the troubles we either feel or fear, to our own sins, and the sins of those among whom we dwell.

1. Let us first look at home. I am a man of unclean lips. I am a sinner. This confession suits us all, and is readily made by all who know themselves. A person approaching London from the neighbouring hills, usually sees it obscured by a cloud of smoke. This cloud is the aggregate of the smoke, to which every house furnishes its respective quota. It is no unfit emblem of the sin and the misery which abounds in this great metropolis. The Lord said of the Amorites, at a certain period, "Their iniquity is not yet full."* I hope the measure of our iniquity is not yet full; but it is filling every day, and we are all daily contributing to fill it. True believers, though, by grace, delivered from the reigning power of sin, are still sinners.† In many things we offend all, in thought, word, and deed. We are now called upon to humble ourselves before God, for the sins of our ignorance, and for the more aggravated sins we have committed against light and experience; for those personal sins, the record of

* Gen. xv. 16. † Rom. vi. 14.

which is known only to God and our consciences; for the defects and defilements of our best services; for our great and manifold failures in the discharge of our relative duties, as parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, or servants, and as members of the community. Our dulness in the ways of God; our alertness in the pursuit of our own will and way; our indifference to what concerns his glory, compared with the quickness of our apprehensions, when our own temporal interests are affected, are so many proofs of our ingratitude and depravity. The sins of the Lord's own people are so many, and so heightened by the consideration of his known goodness, that if he was to enter into judgment with them only, they could offer no other plea than that which he has mercifully provided for them—"If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."*

2. It is easy to declaim against the wickedness of the times. But only they who are duly affected with the multitude and magnitude of their own sins, can be competent judges of what the prophet meant or felt, when he said, "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." We ought to be no less concerned (though in a different manner) for the sins of those among whom we dwell than for our own. We shall be so, if, with the eyes of our mind, we behold the King, the Lord of hosts; because his glory, which should be the dearest object of our hearts, is dishonoured by them.

I think this nation may be considered as the Israel of the New Testament, both with respect of his good-

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* Psalm cxxx. 3, 4.

ness to us, and our perverse returns to him. He has been pleased to select us, as a peculiar people, and to show amongst us such instances of his protection, his favour, his grace, and his patience, as cannot be paralleled in the annals of any other nation.

We have no certain account when the name of Jesus the Saviour was first known in this Island; it was, probably, at an early period of the Christian era. But we do know, that after the long dark night of superstition and ignorance which covered Christendom for many ages, the dawn of returning Gospel light was first seen amongst us. From the time of Wickliffe, the morning-star of the Reformation, the true Gospel has been known, preached, received, and perpetuated to this day. There have been times when they who loved this Gospel have suffered for it. They were preserved faithful, in defiance of stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death itself. But those times are past. We enjoy not only light, but liberty, and the rights of conscience and private judgment, in a degree till of late unknown.

We have likewise been long favoured with peace, though often principals in wars which have been very calamitous, both to our enemies and to the nations which have taken part in our affairs. Our intestine broils, at different times, have contributed to form and establish our present happy constitution. We breathe the air of civil liberty. Our insular situation, and naval force, by the blessing of God, have preserved us from foreign invasions; and when such have been attempted, the winds and seas have often fought our battles. Our wide-spreading and flourishing commerce has raised us to a pitch of opulence which excites the admiration and envy of other nations. Great-Britain

and Ireland appear but as small spots upon a globe or map; but our interests and influence extend, in every direction, to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Will not the Lord's words to Israel apply, with equal propriety, to us? "What could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done? Wherefore, when I looked for grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"*

How is the blessed Gospel improved among us? This would be a heavy day to me, if I did not believe and know, that there are those among our various denominations, who prize and adorn it. If these could be all assembled in one place, I hope they would be found a very considerable number; and, for their sakes, and in answer to their prayers, I humbly trust that mercy will still be afforded to us. But compared with the multitudes who reject, despise, or dishonour it, I fear they are very few. Too many hate it with a bitter hatred, and exert all their influence to oppose and suppress it. The great doctrines of the Reformation are treated with contempt; and both they who preach and they who espouse them, are considered as visionaries or hypocrites, knaves or fools. The Gospel of God is shunned as a pestilence, or complained of as a burden, almost wherever it is known.

Wisdom is, indeed, justified of all her children.† The Gospel is the power of God to the salvation of them that believe. It recalls them from error, from wickedness, and from misery; guides their feet into the ways of peace, and teaches them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.‡ But in the number of those who profess to receive it, there are too

* Isa. v. 4. † Luke, vii. 35. Rom. i. 16. ‡ Titus, ii. 12.

many who confirm and increase the prejudices of those who speak against what they know not. Alas! what extravagant opinions, what fierce dissentions, what loose conversation, what open offences, may be found amongst many who would be thought professors of that Gospel which only breathes the spirit of holiness, love, and peace!

What, then, must be the state of those who avowedly live without God in the world? I need not enlarge upon this painful subject, which forces itself upon the mind, if we only walk the streets, or look into the newspapers. It is not necessary to inform my hearers that infidelity, licentiousness, perjury, profaneness, the neglect and contempt of God's sabbaths and worship, abound. The laws of God, and the laws of the land, so far as their object is to enforce the observance of his commands, are openly and customarily violated in every rank of life. In a day when the Lord of hosts calls to weeping and mourning, thoughtless security, dissipation, and riot, are the characteristics of our national spirit.* The loss of public spirit, and that impatience of subordination so generally observable, so widely diffused, which are the consequences of our sins against God, are, in themselves, moral causes sufficient to ruin the nation, unless his mercy interposes in our behalf.

I should be inexcusable, considering the share I have formerly had in that unhappy business, if, upon this occasion, I should omit to mention the African slave-trade. I do not rank this amongst our national sins, because I hope, and believe, a very great majority of the nation earnestly long for its suppression. But,

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* Isa. xxii. 12, 13.

hitherto, petty and partial interests prevail against the voice of justice, humanity, and truth. This enormity, however, is not sufficiently laid to heart. If you are justly shocked by what you hear of the cruelties practised in France, you would, perhaps, be shocked much more, if you could fully conceive of the evils and miseries inseparable from this traffic, which I apprehend, not from hearsay, but from my own observation, are equal in atrocity, and, perhaps superior in number, in the course of a single year, to any or all the worst actions which have been known in France since the commencement of their revolution. There is a cry of blood against us; a cry accumulated by the accession of fresh victims, of thousands, of scores of thousands, I had almost said of hundreds of thousands, from year to year.

It is but a brief and faint outline I have attempted to give of the present state of this nation in the sight of Almighty God, and of the sins for which we are this day assembled to humble ourselves before him!

II. Have we not, therefore, cause to say, with the Ninevites, who can tell?—Is it not a peradventure? Is there more than a possibility, that we may yet obtain mercy?

If our sins are no less numerous, no less of a scarlet dye, than those of other nations; and exceedingly aggravated beyond theirs, by being committed against clearer light, and the distinguished advantages we have long enjoyed; if we have not only transgressed the laws of God in common with others, but daringly trampled upon the gracious tenders of his forgiveness, which he has long continued to propose to us, with a frequency and energy almost peculiar to ourselves; if all the day long he has stretched out his hands to a disobe-

dient and gainsaying people,* and, hitherto, almost in vain; if neither the tokens of his displeasure nor the declarations of his love, have made a suitable impression upon our minds; who can tell if he will yet be entreated? may we not fear, lest he should say, "My spirit shall strive with them no more:" "They are joined to their idols, let them alone:" "When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my face from you, when you make many prayers, I will not hear!"†

Where are now the mighty empires which were once thought rooted and established as the everlasting mountains? They have disappeared like the mists upon the mountain-tops. Nothing of them remains but their names. They perished, and their memorials have almost perished with them.‡ The patience of God bore with them for a time, and until the purposes for which he raised them up were answered; but when the measure of their iniquity was full, they passed away, and were dispersed, like foam upon the waters. What security have we from such a catastrophe? Or what could we answer, if God should put that question to us, "Shall not I visit for these things? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"§

Where are now the churches which once flourished in Greece and in the Lesser Asia? When the apostle Paul wrote to the former, and when our Lord indited his epistles to the latter, most of them were in a prosperous state. If there ever was a time when the commendations given to them were applicable to professors of the Gospel in our land, I fear we can hardly claim them at present. Can it be justly said of us, that our

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* Rom. x. 21.
† Hosea, iv. 17. Isa. i. 15.
‡ Psalm ix. 6.
§ Jer. v. 9.

faith and love are every where spoken of, and that we are examples to all that believe? that our works, and service, and faith, and patience, are known, and the last to be more than the first?* Or rather, may it not be said of too many, that while they profess to believe in God, in works they deny him?—that they are neither hot nor cold?—that they have a name to live, and are dead?—that they have at least forgotten their first love?† When these defects and declensions began to prevail in the first churches, the Lord admonished and warned them; but instead of watching and repenting, they gradually became more remiss. At length their glory departed, and their candlesticks were removed out of their places. Many regions, which once rejoiced in the light of the Gospel, have been long overspread with Mahometan darkness, and the inhabitants are wretched, ignorant slaves.

Let us not trust in outward privileges, nor rest in a form of godliness destitute of the power. It will be in vain to say, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we,‡ if the Lord of the temple should depart from us. When the Israelites were afraid of the Philistines, they carried the ark of the Lord with them to battle. But God disappointed their vain confidence. He delivered the ark of his glory into the hands of their enemies,§ to teach them, and to teach us, that formal hypocritical worshippers have no good ground to hope for his protection.

Alas! then, who can tell? Appearances are very dark at present. Besides what we may expect or fear

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* Rom. i. 8. 1 Thess. i. 7. Rev. ii. 1. 18, 19.
† Titus, i. 16. Rev. iii. 1. 15. ii. 4.
‡ Jer. vii. 4. § 1 Sam. iv. 5. 11.

from the rage and madness of our foreign enemies, we have much to apprehend at home. A spirit of discord has gone forth. Jeshurun has waxed fat, and kicked.* Many Britons seem weary of liberty, peace, and order. Our happy constitution, our mild government, our many privileges, admired by other nations, are despised and depreciated amongst ourselves: and that not only by the thoughtless and licentious, by those who, having little to lose, may promise themselves a possibility of gain in a time of disturbance and confusion; but they are abetted and instigated by persons of sense, character, and even of religion. I should be quite at a loss to account for this, if I did not consider it as a token of the Lord's displeasure. When he withdraws his blessing, no union can long subsist.

"Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God, with "joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things: therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies whom the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in the want of all things."† These words of Moses to rebellious Israel emphatically describe the former and the present state of many of the French nation, who have been despoiled, insulted, and glad if they could escape (great numbers could not so escape) with the loss of their all, and at the peril of their lives, to a more hospitable shore. May their sufferings remind us of our deserts! Who can tell if the Lord may yet be merciful unto us, and exempt us from similar calamities!

III. But though we have much cause to mourn for our sins, and humbly to deprecate deserved judgments, let us not despond. The Lord our God is a merciful

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* Deut. xxxii. 15.

† Deut. xxxviii. 47, 48.

God! Who can tell but he may repent, and turn from the fierceness of his anger, that we perish not? If the professed business of this day be not confined to a day, but if, by his blessing, it may produce repentance not to be repented of, then I am warranted to tell you, from his word, that there is yet hope. You that tremble for the ark, for the cause of God, whose eyes affect your hearts, who grieve for sin, and for the miseries which sin has multiplied upon the earth; take courage. Let the hearts of the wicked shake, like the leaves of the trees when agitated by a storm;* but be not you like them. The Lord God is your refuge and strength, your resting place, and your hiding place; under the shadow of his wings you shall be safe.†

1. He who loved you and died for your sins, is the Lord of glory. All power in heaven and in earth is committed unto him. The Lord reigneth, let the earth be never so unquiet. All creatures are instruments of his will. The wrath of man, so far as it is permitted to act, shall praise him, shall be made subservient to the accomplishment of his great designs; and the remainder of that wrath, of all their projected violence, which does not coincide with his wise and comprehensive plan, he will restrain.‡ In vain they rage, and fret, and threaten. They act under a secret commission, and can do no more than he permits them. If they attempt it, he has a hook and a bridle in their mouths. When the enemies would come in like a flood, he can lift up a standard against them. As he has set bounds and bars to the tempestuous sea, beyond which it cannot pass, saying, Hitherto shalt thou come,

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* Isa. vii. 2. ‡ Matth. xxviii. 18. Psalm xcix. 1. lxxvi. 10.
† Psalm xlvi. 1. xc. 1. cxix. 114.

and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed; so, with equal ease, he can still the madness of the people.*

You do well to mourn for the sins and miseries of those who know him not. But if you make him your fear and your dread, he will be a sanctuary to you, and keep your hearts in peace, though the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea.†

2. Your part and mine is to watch and pray. Let us pray for ourselves, that we may be found waiting, with our loins girded up, and our lamps burning, that we may be prepared to meet his will in every event.‡ Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for his church, which is dear to him as the pupil of his eye, for the spread of his Gospel, and the extension of his kingdom, till his great name be known and adored from the rising to the setting of the sun,§ and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Many splendid prophecies are yet unfulfilled; and he is now bringing forward their accomplishment. Light will undoubtedly arise out of this darkness. Let us earnestly pray for a blessing from on high, upon our beloved King and his family, upon the counsels of Government and parliament, and upon all subordinate authority in church and state—that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty; that religion and good order may be established, and iniquity be put to shame and silence. Thus we may hope to be secured, by the sure, though secret, mark of divine protection. The Lord will be

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* 2 Kings, xix. 23. Isa. lix. 19. Job, xxxviii. 10, 11. Psalm lxv. 7.
† Isa. viii. 13, 14. Psalm xlvi. 2.
‡ Mark, xiii. 35. xiv. 38. § Mal. i. 11.

our shield, though many should suffer or fall around us. The very hairs of our heads are numbered. Or if, for the manifestation of our faith, and the power of his grace, he should permit us to share in common calamities, we may rely upon him to afford us strength according to our day. He is always near to his people, a very present help in the time of trouble; and he can make the season of their greatest tribulations the season of their sweetest consolations.*

3. And let us pray in faith. Let us remember what great things the Lord has done in answer to prayer. When sin had given Sennacherib rapid success in his invasion of Judah, he did not know that he was no more than an axe, or a saw, in the hand of God. He ascribed his victories to his own prowess, and thought himself equally sure of Jerusalem. But Hezekiah defeated him upon his knees. He spread his blasphemous letter before the Lord in the temple, and prayed; and the Assyrian army melted away like snow.† When Peter was shut up, and chained in prison, the chains fell from his hands, the locks and bolts gave way, and the iron gate opened, while the church was united in earnest prayer for his deliverance.‡

And as we have heard, so have we seen, God has signally answered the prayers of his people, in our own time. Much prayer, both public and private, was offered for our beloved King during his late illness; and how wonderful, how sudden, how seasonable, was his recovery! Surely this was the finger of God! When he thus removed our apprehensions, we were like them that dream!§

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* Ezek. ix. 4. Matth. x. 30. Deut. xxxiii. 25. 2 Cor. i. 5.
† Isa. x. 15. xxxvii. 14—36. ‡ Acts, xii. 5—13.
§ Psalm cxxvi. 1.

I believe prayer was no less efficacious towards the end of the year 1792. I know many people treated the idea of danger at that time as chimerical, because the Lord was pleased to avert it. But I hope we have not quite forgotten the language we heard, and the persons we daily met with in the street, the many daring cabals which were held in this city, and the threatenings which were written in large characters, upon the walls of our houses, at almost every corner. But the hearts of men were turned like the tide, in the critical moment. Then I think the interposition of the Lord was evident. Then we had a repeated proof that he hears and answers prayer.

The present, likewise, is a very important crisis. All that is dear to us, as men, as Britons, as Christians, is threatened. Our enemies are inveterate, and enraged. Our sins testify against us. But if we humble ourselves before God, forsake our sins, and unite, in supplications for mercy, who can tell but he may be entreated to give us that help which it would be in vain to expect from man? Yea, we have encouragement to hope, that "he will be for us," and then none can prevail against us.* But without his blessing, our most powerful efforts, and best concerted undertakings, cannot succeed.

You, who have access to the throne of grace, whose hearts are concerned for the glory of God, and who lament not only the temporal calamities attendant upon war, but the many thousands of souls who are yearly precipitated by it into an eternal, unchangeable state—you, I trust, will show yourselves true friends to your country, by bearing your testimony, and ex-

* Rom. viii. 31.

erting your influence against sin, the procuring cause of all our sorrows; and by standing in the breach, and pleading with God for mercy, in behalf of yourselves, and of the nation. If ten persons, thus disposed, had been found even in Sodom, it would have escaped destruction.*

IV. There may be some persons in this assembly, who are little concerned for their own sins, and are, of course, incapable of taking a proper part in the service of the day. Yet I am glad that you are here; I pity you, I warn you. If you should live to see a time of public distress, what will you do? To whom will you look, or whither will you flee for help? All that is dear to you may be torn from you, or you from it. Or if it please God to prolong our tranquillity, you are liable to many heavy calamities in private life. And if you should be exempted from these, death is inevitable, and may be near. My heart wishes you the possession of those principles which would support you in all the changes of life, and make your dying pillow comfortable. Are you unwilling to be happy? Or can you be happy too soon? Many persons are now looking upon you, who once were as you are now. And I doubt not, they are praying that you may be as they now are. Try to pray for yourself; our God is assuredly in the midst of us. His gracious ear is attentive to every supplicant. Seek him while he is to be found. Jesus died for sinners, and he has said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."† He is likewise the author of that faith, by which alone you can come rightly to him. If you ask it of him, he will give it you; if you seek it, in the means of his appointment, you shall as-

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* Gen. xviii. 32. † John, vi. 37.

suredly find.* If you refuse this, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin.† If you are not saved by faith in his blood, you are lost for ever. "Oh! kiss the Son lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!"‡

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* Matth. vii. 7. † Heb. x. 26, 27. ‡ Psalm ii. 12.

MOTIVES TO HUMILIATION AND PRAISE.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

On December 19, 1797,

THE DAY OF GENERAL THANKSGIVING TO ALMIGHTY GOD FOR OUR LATE NAVAL VICTORIES.

Rejoice with trembling.—PSALM ii. 11.

And after all that is come upon us, for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass; seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a deliverance as this: should we again break thy commandments?—EZRA, ix. 13.

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No other apology is offered for this publication, than the importance of the subject.

Nor is it an exact copy of what was delivered from the pulpit. Had the preacher previously designed to print his sermon, he would have written it; but the method and leading sentiments in both are the same. A few periods have probably escaped recollection, and some of the topics may be a little more amplified.

It was not till after the thanksgiving-day, that the preacher, considering himself as standing upon the verge of an eternal state, thought it might not be improper to avail himself of the occasion, to attempt at least, in a more public manner, to rouse the careless to a serious consideration of the awful state of the times; and to offer some hints for the consolation and encouragement of those whose eyes affect their hearts,* and who are continually supplicating mercy for themselves and their fellow-sinners.

May our great God and Saviour make every reader of this feeble testimony wise unto salvation! *Amen.*

JOHN NEWTON.

Coleman-street Buildings, Jan. 8, 1798.

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* Lam. iii. 51.

MOTIVES OF HUMILIATION AND PRAISE.

HOSEA, xi. 8, 9.

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man, the Holy one in the midst of thee.

THE Most High God, in the revelation of his will to men, adapts his language to the weakness of our conceptions. Heavenly truths are represented by images taken from earthly things.* The metaphors of eyes and hands are used in the Scriptures, to raise our thoughts to some due apprehension of his infinite knowledge, his omnipresence, and his almighty power.† He is likewise spoken of, as deliberating, repenting, rejoicing, and grieving; yet we are sure that passions like those of which we are conscious in ourselves, cannot, in strict propriety, be ascribed to the holy and blessed God. No attentive and serious mind can be misled by this figurative analogy. We learn from the same Scriptures of truth that God is sovereign; that with him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning; that his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure; and that all his works are perfectly known to him, from the beginning of the world.‡ The

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* John, iii. 12. † 1 Pet. iii. 12. Psalm lxxxix. 13.
‡ James, i. 17. Isa. xlvi. 10. Acts, xv. 18.

more familiar modes of expression are designed to teach us, not what he is in himself, but how it becomes us sinful creatures to be affected towards him.

Thus, though the purpose of God concerning Israel was fixed and unalterable, yet to impress us with a sense of his inflexible displeasure against sin, and at the same time to leave open a door of hope and encouragement for penitent sinners, we read of a debate, as it were, between his justice and his mercy. Justice demanded that Israel should be given up, delivered up to vengeance, to such a destruction as that by which God overthrew the cities in the plain of Jericho, Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim.* But mercy interposed, pleaded for a respite, and prevailed. O Ephraim, O Israel, justice calls aloud for vengeance, but how shall I, how can I, give thee up? No; I cannot, I will not; my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled.

Two reasons are assigned, in this pathetic expostulation, why he would still exercise long suffering towards those who so justly deserved to perish. First, "I am God, and not man;" the patience of man, or of any mere creature, would have been overcome long ago by the perverseness of Israel; but he who made them, and he only, was able to bear with them still. Secondly, "I am the Holy One in the midst of thee." In that dark and degenerate day, when the bulk of the nation was in a state of revolt and rebellion, there were a hidden remnant who feared and worshipped the Lord, and who mourned for the abominations which they could not prevent.† Of these the Lord was mind-

* Deut. xxix. 23. † Ezek. ix. 4. 6.

ful, and for the sake of these, deserved judgments were suspended from falling upon the rest.

The people of Israel were for a time in a state of hard bondage, and were severely oppressed in Egypt. The Lord brought them out from thence with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm. He afterwards drowned Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; but he led Israel safely through the deep as upon dry land. In the barren wilderness he fed them with manna, and brought them water out of the rock. In the pathless wilderness he guided them, by a cloud in the day, and by a fire in the night. He fought their battles, subdued their enemies, and put them in possession of the land he had promised to their forefathers. They were a people whom the Most High selected for himself, as his peculiar treasure.* He was their God and their King. They were the only people who were at that time favoured with the knowledge of the true God, and how to worship him acceptably. He gave them his laws and ordinances. He resided among them, and honoured them with a visible token of his presence in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple. They were likewise under an especial care of his providence. The fruitfulness of their land did not depend upon the climate, but the early and the latter rain returned regularly at the stated seasons, by his appointment; and when, in obedience to his commands, all their males, from the most distant parts, went up three times in a year to Jerusalem, and left their borders destitute of human defence, God so impressed the surrounding nations with awe, that, though hostile in their dispositions, they never availed themselves of that seemingly favour-

* Psalm cxxxv. 4.

able opportunity for invading them.* Under the reign of Solomon, they enjoyed peace, plenty, prosperity, and wealth. in a degree till then unknown among the nations of the earth.

What returns did Israel make to the Lord for all these benefits? The history of their conduct is little more than the recital of a long series of ungrateful murmurings, disobedience, and rebellion. They resisted his will, broke his commandments, mingled with the Heathens, and learned their ways. They repeatedly forsook the Lord God of their fathers, worshipped dumb idols, and practised all the abominations of the nations which the Lord had cast out before them. Their sins often brought calamities upon them. The Lord gave them up into the hands of their enemies; they suffered by the sword, by pestilence, and by famine. When he slew them, then they sought him;† and when they sought him, he was entreated of them. He delivered them out of their afflictions; but they soon forgot his goodness, and returned to their evil ways. He sent many of his servants, in succession, to admonish and warn them; but they despised his words, they mocked his messengers, and misused his prophets.‡

Can we wonder, if justice demanded the utter extirpation and ruin of a people so highly favoured, so well instructed, so often chastised and delivered, and yet so incorrigibly ungrateful, daring, and obstinate? Is it not rather wonderful to hear the Lord expressing a reluctance to execute the sentence so justly deserved, and saying of such a people, "How shall I give thee up?"

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* Exod. xxxiv. 24. † Psalm lxxviii. 34. ‡ 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

But can we read the history of Israel, without remarking how strongly it resembles our own? Have we not been equally distinguished from the nations around us, by spiritual and temporal blessings, and by our gross misimprovement of them? We are assembled this day to join in public thanksgivings for public mercies, but we have great cause for public humiliation likewise. We have much reason to rejoice in the goodness of the Lord; but we have reason to temper our joy with trembling,* when we compare the state of things around us with that of Ephraim and Judah in the days of the prophet Hosea.

While too many persons lose their time and temper in political and party disputes, and refer all the calamities we either feel or fear to instruments and second causes, let us acknowledge that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!† Let us consider sin as the procuring cause of all our troubles. Let us recognize his hand in them, and confess that, in all the distress he has brought upon us, he has not dealt with us as our iniquities deserve. May our hearts be suitably affected, while I attempt a brief sketch of the abounding evils and abominations prevalent amongst us, which might justly provoke the Lord to sweep this land, so long the land of peace and liberty, with the besom of destruction: and then we shall be prepared to praise him for those merciful and signal interpositions of his providence, which afford us some ground to hope, that notwithstanding all our provocations, he will not yet give us up.

1. Offences of the same kind may be heightened and aggravated by circumstances. Thus an insult of-

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* Psalm ii. 11. † Rev. xix. 6.

ferred to a benefactor, a parent, or a king, is deemed more grievous than if the person offended was in all respects an equal. In this sense, I fear the sins of Great Britain are of a deeper dye than those of any nation in Europe; because they are committed against greater advantages and privileges than any other people have enjoyed. May not the Lord appeal to ourselves, as to Israel of old, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done?"* After the black night of Popish darkness, in which Christendom had been for ages involved, Wickliffe, the morning-star and harbinger of the Reformation, arose in our borders. From his time, we have been favoured with a succession of preachers of the Gospel, and of witnesses to its truth and power. Not a few of these sealed their profession with their blood; and a much greater number suffered in the same cause, by fines, stripes, banishment, and imprisonment But since the Revolution, and especially since the accession of king George I. to the throne, the spirit of persecution has been greatly repressed and chained up. We are not now called to resist unto blood. Nor is there any Protestant country where religious liberty is so universally enjoyed, and with so little restraint, as in the dominions of Great Britain.

O fortunati nimium, sau si bona nôrint!

Our constitution, the basis and bulwark of our civil liberty, is the admiration or envy of our surrounding neighbours. It cost our forefathers many struggles to bring forward and establish this national blessing; but

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* Isa. v. 4.

we have enjoyed it so long, and so quietly, that we seem almost to forget its value, how it was obtained, or how only it can be preserved. Wo be to us, if God should succeed the desires and endeavours of those who are disposed to exchange it for licentiousness? Add to this our public prosperity.—While we have been principals in many wars, which have spread devastation and misery far and wide abroad, we have had uninterrupted peace at home; and know so little of the calamities of war, that were it not for the increase of taxes, it is probable we should not be soon weary of hearing of battles, and the slaughter of thousands, provided victory declared on our side. Our arms and our commerce have almost, like the ocean, encompassed the habitable globe, and we are become the grand mart and emporium of the earth.

But what have been our returns to the Lord for all his goodness? May he not say of us, as of Israel, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me?"* I attempt not to explain the unfulfilled prophecies in the Apocalypse; but the first, second, and third chapters of the Prophecy of Isaiah are so obviously applicable to the present state of these kingdoms, that we need look no further to perceive both our sin and our danger. May the Lord soften our hearts for our own sins, the sins of professors of the Gospel, and those national sins which strongly mark our character as a people!

The true Christian sees much cause of humiliation in himself. Though he cannot but take sorrowful notice of what passes around him, he is more ready to scrutinize and blame his own misconduct, than that of

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* Isa. i. 2.

other men. He confesses that his best is defective and defiled. Though he exercises himself to maintain a conscience void of offence. and dares appeal to the Lord for the sincerity of his aims, he owns that in every thing he comes short. His obligations to the Redeemer are immense, and his sensations of gratitude, and exertions in service, are vastly disproportionate to them: yet having accepted the atonement, and resting his hope of salvation upon Jesus, though his imperfections humble him, they do not discourage him. But he acknowledges, that if justice were strict to mark what is amiss, his own sins are so many and so great, that he could have no right to complain, though he had a large share of the heaviest calamities incident to this mortal life. They who are thus minded, are the chariots and horsemen of the land in which they live. They sigh and mourn for their own sins, and the evils which they cannot prevent. They have little thanks from the blind, careless, ungodly many around them. They are rather scorned and despised for their singularity, and unfashionable preciseness; but if this nation be spared from destruction, it will be for their sakes, and for the attention with which God regards their prayers. If we had no such persons amongst us, our fleets and armies would prove but a poor and precarious defence. But I trust their number is not small. They are dispersed up and down throughout the kingdom, and are the salt of the earth, which preserves us from total putrefaction.

2. By professors, we mean those who assent to the leading doctrines of the Gospel, and usually attend where it is preached. I know this distinction is deemed invidious. We are sometimes asked—Why do you appropriate the term *Gospel* to yourselves? Do not

all ministers preach the Gospel? Most certainly not. The doctrines from many pulpits are contrary, yea, contradictory. They cannot be all right. Yea, the doctrines from too many pulpits in our established church contradict the Articles and the Liturgy, which the preachers have solemnly subscribed. The Articles and Liturgy bear express testimony to the universal and total depravity of human nature, the Deity and atonement of the Saviour, the necessity of regeneration, a new birth, and a new life of sanctification, and of the abiding influence of the Holy Spirit of God to awaken sinners, to produce faith, and to instruct, comfort, and establish those who believe. These points are essential to the scheme of the Gospel, as it is set before us by the evangelists and the apostles. They who espouse them are called professors—a title which includes all those whom I have already mentioned, but is extended to many more, or at least is assumed by them. Happy, indeed, would it be, if all who seem to agree in principles, were united in love among themselves, and exhibited in the sight of men, in their tempers, practice, and pursuits, a conversation becoming the Gospel they profess. But in the days of the apostles there were those who, while they professed to believe in God, denied him by their works, who were enemies to the cross of Christ,* and caused the good way to be evil spoken of. We lament, more than wonder, that it should be so now: for human nature is the same in all ages; and even among those of whom we hope better—contentions, divisions, the heat of party zeal, the coldness of brotherly love, and a blameable conformity to the spirit and customs of the world, are but too visi-

* Phil. iii. 18. Titus, i. 16.

ble. The sins of professors alone, if duly considered, might make us apprehensive that judgment is even at the doors.

3. There are likewise sins so generally prevalent, so familiar and habitual in every rank of life, that they may properly be called national; because, either by their nature or their frequency, they mark and distinguish our public morals. To enumerate these, would be a painful and arduous task: but my subject requires me to notice some of the most prominent and notorious.

First, Infidelity. Though the sophistry and machinations of the philosophers in France, and of those who style themselves the Illuminati in Germany, have more or less infected the whole of Christendom with their sceptical and dangerous sentiments, so that we hold them in common with many other nations; and though we have not, like the unhappy French, openly and avowedly renounced the government of God; yet I fear that the worst kind of infidelity (which is still rapidly spreading through the land) is already become one of our national sins. Formerly, most of our free-thinkers assumed the more modest name of deists; and though they rejected the Scriptures, they professed a regard to what they called natural religion; they wrote likewise chiefly for men like themselves, of a speculative and inquisitive turn, and did not appear much concerned to proselyte the common people. They seemed to allow that the principles of Christianity, though not necessary to persons of their sagacity, might be useful to preserve the peace and order of society, and to keep the vulgar within some bounds of good government and subordination. I have myself known those who, upon this ground, regularly, or at least frequently,

attended public worship, not that they desired or expected any benefit from it, but to set a good example to their wives, children, and servants, whom they thought either not competent to understand their more sublime discoveries, or not fit to be intrusted with them. These champions likewise went forth singly to the combat; but now there is a strong compacted confederacy against all religion, both name and thing. Neither the mortal nor the immortal deists are much thought of at present. Philosophers have pushed their inquiries far beyond the narrow views of the deists, and proclaim themselves to be atheists. They tell us, that either there is no God, or that he does not take cognizance of human affairs. To relieve the consciences of men from those foreboding fears of a future judgment which are not easily separable from guilt, they boldly affirm death to be an eternal sleep. Though these, and similar dreadful tenets, have not obtained the publicity and authority with us which they have in France, they have spread like a contagion through the kingdom. Multitudes in every degree of life, from the noble to the peasant, have adopted them.

Not that I ascribe the progress of infidelity chiefly to Thomas Paine, or to writers of a superior class in the same line; but they have brought it more into view. Long before the modern philosophers were born, "the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."* Infidelity is congenial to human nature. Infidel writings, like the touch of Ithuriel's spear, have disclosed what for a time was hidden or disguised: the spirits of many were prepared. They were infidels before, though for want of attention they scarcely knew it, or

* Psalm xiv. 1.

for want of boldness, were afraid to own it. The effects are evident. With many people of fashion, infidelity is fashionable. Their dependants and servants imbibe their sentiments, and, so far as their ability reaches, imitate their practice. Every class of society downwards, tradesmen, porters, labourers, and hostlers, are no less pleased with thinking, and acting without control, than their superiors. Thus the bonds of society are weakened; vice, idleness, impatience, murmuring, and insubordination, are seen wherever we turn our eyes. When will these things end? When men agree to cast off the fear of God, they will seldom long accord in any thing else. Man, in his natural state, is a wild creature! but while his conscience is not quite hardened, while he acknowledges a God, and expects a future state and a day of judgment, though he commits many evils, he is restrained from committing many more, and greater, to which his corrupt propensities would otherwise incline him, and from which he would not be deterred by mere human laws and penalties. Such a sinner may be compared to a lion in the Tower; but an infidel is a lion in the street.

Secondly: The great neglect of the obligations of religion, amongst those who have not explicitly cast off all regard to it, is a national sin. If a stranger from some remote part of the world, who understood our language, was to see and hear all that passes at a contested election, at our cockpits, gaming-houses, race-grounds, boxing-matches, and many other promiscuous assemblies, what judgment could he form of our religion? Or could he readily believe that we had any? And yet we could not tell him that they are all infidels. Many who live in the habitual neglect or breach of the precepts of Scripture, would still be thought Christians,

though they have little but the avowal of the name, to distinguish them from the most determined infidels. And it is to be feared that such Christians constitute a very great majority of the people of England.

Thirdly: The contempt of the Gospel of Christ, will, I fear, be found a national sin, with the exception of the comparatively few who cordially embrace it. I have already explained in what sense I understand the word Gospel. When the doctrines of our established church, which in the main are conformable to the confessions and standards of all the Protestant churches in Europe, are faithfully preached, and especially when first introduced into a parish, they usually cause a general alarm; they excite a general opposition. This Gospel is shunned and dreaded like a pestilence, and the strongest exertions are made to prevent its entrance, or to expel it, if possible. The ministers who preach it faithfully are stigmatized and misrepresented. We learn from Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny, that the name of Christian was once so extremely odious, that whoever dared to own it was suspected as capable or guilty of the worst crimes, though no proof could be brought of his having committed any. The word *Methodist* has a degree of the like effect in our day. It is not now, as when first imposed, the name of a particular sect or body of people, but is applied to all who preach and approve the doctrines of the Gospel, if they are not Dissenters. And it operates with a kind of magical force; the very sound of the word is sufficient to fill the minds of many people with prejudices against the truth. Neither learning, piety, an exemplary conduct, nor a regular compliance with the rules of the rubric, can always, or often, secure a minister from contempt, if the giddy world think proper to call him a Methodist.

The people prefer those who will prophesy smooth things;* and in most places they have their wish. Candour itself cannot deny, that there are in many parishes of this kingdom official shepherds, who have neither will nor skill to teach or watch over their flocks: and multitudes of people who, for want of proper instruction, have little more knowledge of Christianity than the Indians in America. Some of us have reason to be thankful to God, and to our superiors in church and state, that we are not discountenanced or molested in the exercise of our ministry. But our path is not the ordinary road to approbation or preferment. There are not many evangelical clergymen who have benefices, and these have been chiefly bestowed by private patronage.†

Fourthly: Because of swearing, the land mourneth.‡ This generally prevailing enormity has two branches—First, customary profane swearing, blasphemy and execration, in common discourse. We can seldom walk the length of a street, without having our ears pained and our hearts wounded, by the bitter imprecations which thoughtless creatures utter against themselves, or each other. It might be expected that this horrid wickedness would be confined to the lowest and most abandoned of the common people. But it is far otherwise. Gentlemen and noblemen make a point of dis-

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* Isa. xxx. 10.

† Upon the death of the late Mr. Romaine, rector of St. Andrew Wardrobe, and St. Anne's Blackfriars, the inhabitants united in a petition to the lord Chancellor, in favour of his curate, whom they wished to succeed him in the living; and the lord Chancellor was pleased to grant their request. I mention this exception with pleasure; because I think it is much to the honour both of his Lordship and of the parishioners.

‡ Jer. xxiii. 10.

tinguishing themselves from the vulgar, by their houses, their dress, their tables, and their equipage; but many of them, in their language, take a strange pleasure in degrading themselves to a level with the vilest of the species; so that, were it not for their exterior, we might be led to think that they had spent their whole lives among stable grooms and postillions: and thus, by their own proficiency and example, they harden and confirm in their wickedness those whom they imitate.

The insult offered to the majesty and holiness of God by *common* swearing, contributes greatly to take off a sense of the heinous sin of perjury, or *false* swearing; an appeal to the God of truth in confirmation of a lie. This is the other branch of that swearing for which the land ought to mourn, and, sooner or later, must mourn. Perjury is emphatically one of our national sins. "The multiplicity of oaths, which are interwoven into almost every branch of public business, involves thousands in the habitual guilt of perjury. Many of them, it is true, do not necessarily lead to sin, because honest and conscientious men may and do strictly observe them; but it is to be feared, a greater number deliberately and customarily violate these solemn obligations, and take them as often as imposed, without hesitation, and without any desire of complying with them. Not a few of these oaths are either so worded or so circumstanced, that it is morally impossible to fulfil them; and if a person was even to attempt it, he would be thought a busy-body or a fool; yet they must be tendered, and must be taken as a matter of form, when nothing more is expected or purposed on either side. The number of churchwardens and constables who are annually sworn is very great; and as these offices are chiefly held by rota-

tion, in the course of a few years they take in a considerable part of the middling people in the kingdom. How many, or how few, of them act up to the letter and the spirit of the oaths they have taken, will be known in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. But it is now evident, that while many, like sheep, tread without thought in the path of custom, content to forswear themselves because others have done so before them; and some are hardy enough to trifle with God and man for profit; the laws which enjoin and multiply oaths, do thereby furnish and multiply temptations to the sin of perjury. The frequency of oaths, the irreverent manner in which they are often administered, and the impunity with which they are broken, have greatly contributed to weaken the sense of every moral obligation, and to spread a dissolute and daring spirit throughout the land."

5. Oppression is a national sin, if the grievance be publicly known, and no constitutional measures adopted for prevention or relief. Charges of this nature have been brought against the exercise of our power, both in the east and in the west. I pretend not to say how far they were founded in truth, or exaggerated. I confine myself to a single instance, of which my own knowledge warrants me to speak. I have more than once confessed, with shame, in this pulpit, the concern I too long had in the African slave-trade. This trade, marked as it is with the epithet INFAMOUS by a vote of the House of Commons, is still carried on, and under the sanction of the legislature. Though the repeated attempts to procure the abolition of this trade have not succeeded, they have doubtless contributed to meliorate the condition of the blacks who are in a state of slavery

in our West-India islands. The mode of their transportation thither from the African coast seems to be less tormenting and fatal than formerly. How far this trade may have been affected by the present war, I know not. When I was engaged in it, we generally supposed, for an accurate calculation was not practicable, that there were not less than a hundred thousand persons, men, women, and children, brought off the coast, by the European vessels of all nations; and that an equal number lost their lives annually, by the wars and other calamities occasioned by the traffic, either on shore without reaching the ship, or on shipboard before they reached the places of sale. It was also supposed that more than one half, perhaps three fifths of the trade, was in the hands of the English. If the trade is at present carried on to the same extent, and nearly in the same manner, while we are delaying from year to year to put a stop to our part of it, the blood of many thousands of our helpless, much-injured fellow-creatures, is crying against us. The pitiable state of the survivors, who are torn from their nearest relatives, connexions, and their native land, must be taken into the account. Enough of this horrid scene. I fear the African trade is a national sin, for the enormities which accompany it are now generally known; and though perhaps the greater part of the nation would be pleased if it were suppressed, yet as it does not immediately affect their own interest, they are passive. The shop-tax, a few years since, touched them in a more sensible and tender part, and therefore petitions and remonstrances were presented and repeated, till the tax was repealed. Can we wonder that the calamities of the present war begin to be felt at home, when we ourselves wilfully and deliberately inflict much greater ca-

lamities upon the native Africans, who never offended us? That is an awful word, "Wo unto thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled."*

6. A proud, boasting spirit, and a vain confidence in our own strength and resources, is a prominent part of our national character. Though infidelity, irreligion, contempt both of the law and the Gospel of God, profaneness, perjury, and oppression, expose us to his vengeance—though the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and have fallen heavily on a great part of Europe—and though his hand is evidently lifted up against us, yet few will see† and acknowledge it. Instead of such a general spirit of humiliation as was awakened in Nineveh by the preaching of Jonah, so well becoming our sins and our situation, we still boast in our fleets and armies. Especially the wooden walls of old England are spoken of as impregnable, and we still suppose ourselves to be sovereign lords of the sea. Some late providential dispensations were well suited to show us, not only the sin but the folly of this spirit; but the impression, if any, was transient; it soon wore off. The praise justly due to our admirals, officers, and seamen, was readily offered; but unless the king had called us, as on this day, to unite with him in ascribing our success to the Lord of Hosts, who alone giveth the victory, even the verbal offering of praise to God would have been confined to a few. And still we boast. This arrogant spirit, and especially at such a time as this, is no small aggravation of all our other sins.

I could proceed to further particulars, but my spirits

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* Isa. xxxiii. 1. † Isa. xxvi. 11.

are depressed; and I hope the hearts of my hearers are duly affected by what I have already said. Is there any relief? Have we any ground to hope that the Lord will yet say of such a nation as this, "How shall I give thee up?" I turn with pleasure to this more comfortable branch of my subject.

II. Yes, though we have many causes for trembling, we are not without causes for an humble joy and thankfulness.

1. I hope the occasion of our present assembling is a token for good. We are met, in consequence of a royal proclamation, to join in spirit with our king, who, perhaps while I am speaking, may be entering St. Paul's cathedral, attended by the royal family, both houses of parliament, and many of the nobility and principal persons of the court. He goes to make the most public and solemn acknowledgments of his dependence on the providence and power of Almighty God, and to ascribe to him, to whom it most justly belongs, praise and thanksgiving for the many interpositions he has favoured us with as a people, in this season of danger and distress; particularly for the three signal, critical, and decisive victories which he gave us in succession, over the French, Spanish, and Dutch fleets. We remember with what universal joy the king's former appearance at St. Paul's, after his recovery from his illness, was entertained by his loyal subjects; and though the introduction of French principles and French politics, since that period, has not been without mischievous effects, we trust that the joy upon this occasion will at least be general.*

* I was not mistaken in my expectation. The order and regularity with which the procession was conducted, the peaceful behaviour of the immense multitude of spectators, the serenity and mildness of the weather,

Though I cannot suppose that every person in the procession, or among the many thousand spectators, felt the same sentiments of gratitude to God, which induced the king to appoint a day of thanksgiving—yet I consider it as a public and national act; and in this view, contrasted with the atheistical rage and blasphemies of the French Directory and councils, who insult and defy, not these kingdoms only, but the God whom we worship; I indulge a hope, that, unworthy as we are of his mercy, the Lord will put a hook and a bridle in the mouths of these modern Rabshakehs, and will not give us up as a prey to their merciless rapacity and revenge.

2. When the French formed the design of invading Ireland, they thought themselves sure of success. They probably would have found encouragement in one part of that kingdom, if they could have reached it; and therefore they spoke like Pharaoh, who said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil," and they were disconcerted almost in the same manner. The Lord blew with his wind, and scattered them. Some of their stoutest ships, and many of their men, sunk as lead in the mighty waters.* And the Lord God did it himself. We had a strong fleet to watch and oppose them, but they were not permitted to come near, or even to see one of their ships. Nor had our boasted naval force the opportunity of firing a single gun in our defence.

(so unusual with us in the depth of winter,) the almost total exemption from what are commonly called accidents; and the quietness with which the evening closed, I consider, collectively, as warranting a hope that the Lord was pleased to smile upon the day, and upon the design.

* Exod. xv. 9, 10.

3. The suppression of the mutiny, which, like an infectious disorder, pervaded all our fleets, was so sudden, so unexpected, and at the time when it was risen to such an alarming height that all resistance seemed vain, that it can be ascribed only to the mercy and power of God. Then, if ever, was the time when the proud and the boasters trembled. And while we were thus exposed and defenceless in every quarter, the providence of God laid an embargo upon the fleets of our enemies, so that they could not attempt any thing against us. It is further to be observed, that the mutiny at the Nore, which was the most formidable, as the ships had the full command of the river, so that nothing could pass or repass to or from London; this threatening disaster, which painted terror and dismay in the countenance of almost every person we met in the streets, in the event led to that re-establishment of our marine discipline, without which the strength of our invincible navy would have been but like a rope of sand. Well may we say, What has God wrought!

4. In the close of the year 1795, we felt a scarcity, and feared a famine. Opportunity was presented and greedily seized by monopolizers, to raise the corn to such an enormous price, that had it not been for great and liberal exertions, the poor in many places, perhaps in every place, must have been absolutely destitute of bread. What must the consequence have been, if God had visited us with a scanty or a wet harvest the following year? For our resource from foreign supplies was cut off in many parts, and rendered very precarious in the rest by the war. But he is a hearer of prayer. In 1796, the earth brought forth by handfulls.*

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* Gen. xli. 47.

Such an abundant harvest, and such a remarkably fine season for gathering in the precious fruits of the earth, have been seldom known.

5. Our sins have involved us in a calamitous war; and though our sufferings are not to be compared with those of the countries on the continent where the war has raged, it has brought upon us much real distress. Many widows and orphans are bemoaning the effects. The decline of some manufactures, the increased taxes, the advanced price of most of the necessaries of life, are severely felt by the industrious poor, and by many families in the middling and lower classes of society. It is well known that there is a number of persons who unhappily employ their abilities and influence, to aggravate the sense of these difficulties, to inflame the minds of the sufferers, to work upon their passions, to alienate them from the government, and to make them long, if possible, for such liberty and equality as has already reduced France to the most pitiable state of anarchy and misery. That such attempts have not succeeded, that we are still preserved, not only from foreign invasion, but from internal commotions, I ascribe to the power of the great God over the hearts of the children of men; and I consider it as a further ground of hope, that he will not give us up.

III. Why would he not give up degenerate Israel, when strict justice demanded their destruction? Two reasons are assigned in my text for his forbearance, which are well suited to encourage the prayers and hopes of those amongst ourselves who love and fear him.

1. "I am God and not man." If we had offended men or angels, as we have offended our Creator and Redeemer, and they had permission and power to

punish us, our case would be utterly desperate. Only he who made us, is able to bear with us. All the attributes (as we speak) of the Infinite God, must of course be equally infinite. As is his majesty, so is his mercy.* What is the puny power of man, compared with that almighty power which formed and upholds the immense universe? The disproportion is greater than that between a single drop of water and the boundless ocean. Thus his thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Who can set bounds to the exercise of his patience? When sentence was denounced against Nineveh, they humbled themselves before him, and he suspended the execution. There is at least a peradventure in our favour, "Who can tell if God will turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" He has said, "At what time I shall speak concerning a nation, or a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, or to destroy; if that nation turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."† We do not suppose that all the inhabitants of Nineveh were savingly converted; but they humbled themselves with one consent, they cried for mercy, and they were spared. We do not expect a national conversion; and I fear we have little prospect of a national humiliation. But,

2. "I am the Holy One in the midst of thee." Next to the consideration of his infinite mercy, this is our strongest ground for consolation. The Holy One is still in the midst of us! Degenerate and wicked as we are, God has a people, a remnant amongst us. I have spoken of these already. Their number is small, if compared with the bulk of the nation; but if they could

* Eccles. ii. 18. † Jer. xviii. 7, 8.

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be collected together, they would form a considerable body, (I trust it is an increasing body,) who, though distinguished by different names, and dispersed far and wide into different parts of the land, are united, by a faith of divine operation, to one head, and in one common interest and design. They belong to that kingdom which is not of this world, and which (unlike all other kingdoms) cannot be shaken. But their principles lead them to seek the welfare of the communities in which they live. These are, under God, *decus et tutamen*, the glory and the defence of Great Britain. They are lights shining in a dark place. They are believers, and their faith worketh by love. But as they follow the example of their Lord and Master, the world knows not them, because it knows not Him. Here and there, individuals, by an unblamable, consistent conduct, in a course of years, if they cannot change the hearts of gainsayers, are enabled to stop their mouths, and put their ignorance to silence by well doing.* But many persons despise them in the gross, and affect to deem them (perhaps in defiance to the checks of their own consciences) either hypocrites or visionaries, credulous fools, or designing knaves. But their record is on high. They have access to God and communion with him, by the Son of his love. They have the spirit of prayer, and their prayers are heard. The ship in which Paul sailed to Italy was preserved from sinking, though apparently in the utmost danger, because the apostle was on board her. Not only was this servant of God as safe in a storm at sea as if he had been on shore, but for his sake the Lord preserved the lives of all who were in the vessel. The state ship of this nation is

* 1 Pet. ii. 15.

now in jeopardy, she is brought into deep waters, tossed with tempests, and her rowers* are almost at their wits' end; but there is a precious *depositum* on board. A people dear to the Lord are embarked in the same bottom with the rest, and we hope their prayers will prevail for the safety of the whole. The French, who know little of Christianity but as they have seen it through the corrupt medium of Popery, having triumphed over and melted down the golden and silver images of their tutelary saints, promise themselves an easy victory over us. They know not that the Holy One of Israel is in the midst of us, and that there are a people here who are under his special protection. They know not that, like Sennacherib, their success is wholly owing to their being instruments of his will, like saws or hammers in the hand of the workman; and that when they have accomplished his purpose, he can and he will say to them, "Hitherto thou shalt come, and no further." They have succeeded, beyond their own expectations, far and wide upon the continent; but all their attempts and designs against our favoured land have hitherto been rendered abortive. We hope they will still prove so.

At all events, it shall be well with the righteous.† Rejoice, believers, in the Lord. You may be assured, upon the warrant of his faithful promise, either that he will preserve you from the evils which our sins give us such cause to apprehend; or if he should appoint you to share in a common calamity, he will make your strength equal to your day, and will prepare you shoes of iron and brass,‡ when any part of the road, on which you travel through this wilderness towards your heavenly home, shall prove very difficult and rugged. Pray

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* Ezek. xxvii. 26. † Isa. iii. 10. ‡ Deut. xxxiii. 25.

for grace to sit loose to the world, and you will have nothing to fear. The first Christians rejoiced in the spoiling of their goods; and so shall you, if the Lord calls you to the trial. You have the same Saviour to support you, and you likewise have treasures, far better and more enduring, out of the reach of violence.* The Lord teaches us to consider even the loss of life as comparatively of small importance, when he says, "Fear not them that can kill the body, but can do no more." They cannot do that without his permission. The very hairs of your head are numbered.† And most of those who have suffered death for him who died upon the cross for them, have thought the honour of dying in his cause more to be valued than a thousand lives.

My feelings are painful for you who live without God in the world. I do not wonder if your hearts tremble like the leaves of a tree when agitated by a mighty wind.‡ You know not what may come upon you, but you forebode the worst—and should it prove so, you have no resource, no hiding place, no Almighty Friend to whom you may with confidence apply for help in time of trouble. Death, at least, is inevitable; and will you dare to die (yet die you must) if your heart be unhumbled, and your sins unpardoned? We preach to you a gracious, powerful Saviour, who invites you to seek him, and has said, "Him that cometh to me, I will *in no wise* cast out." Seek him then to-day, whilst it is called to-day. Now is the accepted time, the day of salvation. To-morrow is not your own.

But let believers rejoice and be glad. The Lord

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* Heb. x. 34. † Luke, xii. 4. Matth. x. 30. ‡ Isa. vii. 2.

reigns, *your* Lord reigns. He who loved you, and gave himself for you, possesses and exercises all power in heaven and earth.* Though clouds and darkness are about his throne, and his paths are untraceable by us, we are sure that he is carrying on his great designs, for the glory of his great name, and for the extension and establishment of his church, in a way worthy of himself—worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness. Make his name your strong tower of refuge.† Hold out faith and patience. Yet a little while, and we hope to meet, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest;"‡ and to hear those welcome words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.§

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* Psalm xcvii. 1. Matth. xxviii. 18.
† Prov. xviii. 10.
‡ Job. iii. 17.
§ Matth. xxv. 34.

LETTERS TO A WIFE.

WRITTEN DURING

THREE VOYAGES TO AFRICA,

FROM 1750 TO 1754.

———O laborum
Dulce lenimen———!

HOR.

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.—PSALM cvii. 23, 24.

PREFACE.

WHEN, after repeated checks of conscience, I obstinately broke through all restraints of religion, it pleased God for a time to give me up to my own wilfulness and folly; perhaps as much so, as ever poor creature was given up to himself, who did not finally perish. The way of transgressors is always hard. It proved so to me. The miseries into which I plunged myself, could only be exceeded by the dreadful wickedness of my heart and life. At length I was driven to the desperate determination of living upon the coast of Africa. My principal residence was at the Plantanes, an island at the mouth of the river of Sherbro, on the windward coast, about twenty leagues S. E. from Sierra Leone. Some account of this mournful part of my early life has been long in print.

The coast of Guinea is a country from whose bourn few travellers, who have once ventured to settle there, ever return. But God, against whom I had sinned with a high hand, was pleased to appoint me to be a singular instance of his mercy. He not only spared me, but watched over me, by his merciful providence, when I seemed to be bent upon my own destruction; and provided for my deliverance from my wretched thraldom. To him who has all hearts in his hands I ascribe it, that a friend of my father's, the late Mr. Joseph Manesty, a merchant of Liverpool, to whom I was then an utter stranger, directed the captain of one of his ships to inquire for me, and, if he could, to bring me

home. This proposal for my deliverance, no less unexpected than undeserved by me, reached me at a time when some circumstances of my captivity were, according to my wretched views and taste, a little amended, and I at first hesitated to accept it. And, I believe, had it not been for one consideration, which will be often mentioned in the course of these letters, I should have lived and died in my bondage. When I returned to Liverpool I found, in Mr. Manesty, a second father; he treated me with great kindness, and took upon himself the care of providing for me.

Towards the close of the year 1749, Mr. Manesty promised me the command of a ship to Africa, in the ensuing season. On this promise (for I had no other dependence) I ventured to marry on the first of February following, where my heart had been long engaged. After I had gained my point, I often trembled for my precipitation. For though I am sure I should have preferred the person I marrried to any other woman in the world, though possessed of the mines of Potosi; (she had no fortune;) and if any thing had happened to involve her in difficulties upon my account, I think my strong affection for her would have made me truly miserable.

I have often thought since, that we were then like two unexperienced people on the edge of a wide wilderness, without a guide, ignorant of the way they should take, entirely unapprised of the difficulties they might have to encounter. But the Lord God, whom at that time we knew not, had mercifully purposed to be our guide and our guard.

The imminent danger and extreme distress to which we were reduced by a storm, in my passage from Africa to Liverpool, had, by the mercy of God, made such an impression upon my mind, that I was no longer an in-

fidel or a libertine. I had some serious thoughts, was considerably reformed, but too well satisfied with my reformation. If I had any spiritual light, it was but as the first faint streaks of the early dawn; and I believe it was not yet day-break with my dear wife. She was young, cheerful, and much esteemed by her connexions, which were genteel and numerous. She was not wanting in that decent religion which is compatible with the supposed innocent gayeties of a wordly life; and which disposes people to be equally ready and punctual (in their respective seasons) at church and at cards, at the assembly or theatre, and at the sacrament. Further than this she knew not, nor was I qualified to teach her. It is rather probable that, if I could have remained at home, my great attachment to her would have drawn me into the same paths, and that we should have looked no higher for happiness than to our mutual satisfaction in each other.

But God had designed better things for us. The season for sailing approached, and I was constrained to leave her, to take the command and charge of my ship. This necessity of being absent from her, which then seemed to me bitter as death, I have now reason to acknowledge as one of the chief mercies of my life. *Nisi periissem, periissem.* If I could have obtained my fond short-sighted wish, and have continued with her, I see that, humanly speaking, it might have proved the ruin of us both.

The summons I received to repair to Liverpool, awakened me as out of a dream. When I was forced from her, I found both leisure and occasion for much reflection. My serious thoughts, which had been almost smothered, began to revive. And my anxiety with re-

spect to what might possibly happen while I was abroad, induced me to offer up many prayers for her, before I well knew how to pray for myself. He who takes notice of the cries of the young ravens in their nests, was pleased to hear mine. In a word, I soon felt the need of that support which only religion can give. The separation likewise tended, on both sides, to give a certain tenderness and delicacy, and thereby a permanency, to our affection, which might not have flourished to equal advantage, through life, if we had always lived together.

This brief introduction may possibly throw some light upon several passages which will occur in the course of my correspondence.

The only expedient we could then think of to alleviate the pains of absence, was writing. Letters were accordingly exchanged, by every post, while I staid in England: and when I sailed, and could not expect to hear from her for a long time, I still continued to write on the usual post-days. And this practice afforded me so much relief and pleasure, that it was not long before I wrote (if business and circumstances would permit) almost every day of every week. Few, if any, of my letters miscarried. The first volume* of this publication is formed by a selection of extracts from those which I sent home during the three voyages I made to Africa. Those in the second, are extracted from a number almost equal, which I wrote when we were occasionally separated, after the good providence of God freed me from that iniquitous employment in which I was too long ignorantly engaged, and appointed me a settlement on shore.

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* These letters were originally published in two volumes.

When I first undertook this painful, pleasing task, I had not the least thought of the letters appearing in print so soon. I intended them for a posthumous legacy to my friends and to the public. But in the progress of the work, my objections to publishing them myself, were gradually weakened; and I became more willing to erect, as it were, a monument to the memory of a valuable and much valued woman in my own lifetime. The only justifiable plea I can allege for printing these letters at all, is a hope that, by the blessing of God, they may be made useful to some of my readers; and if this hope be not ill-founded, the sooner they appear the better. Some testimony in favour of the happiness of wedded life, some intimation of the snares and abatements which attend it, seems not unseasonable in the present day. And perhaps I am, by experience, qualified to be as unexceptionable a witness, in both respects, as most men.

I am aware that I shall expose myself to the charge of egotism; but this I may cheerfully submit to, if my heart does not deceive me with respect to my motives and proposed end. Neither the censures nor the praises of men, ought to have an undue influence upon those who profess to act with a view to the glory of God, and the benefit of their fellow-creatures. And as to myself, now far advanced in life, and standing upon the brink of the grave and of eternity, it does not become me to be very solicitous what mortals may say or think of me, either at present, or when I shall cease to be seen among them, provided I am justly chargeable with nothing unsuitable to my profession and general character. We must all shortly appear before the tribunal of the great, unerring Judge, the one Lawgiver, who is able to save or to destroy. *Dies iste indicabit.*

Then the secrets of all hearts will be unfolded, and every character will appear in its true light.

Yet as my letters are of a singular cast, and I tread upon rather new and unbeaten ground, the respect which I owe to my readers requires me to request their candid perusal, and to soften, if I can, such objections as I foresee may arise in their minds (as they may be differently disposed) to different parts of the book.

It is proper to make an apology to the public at large, for the detail of many incidents which, however interesting to myself, especially at the time of writing, are certainly not sufficiently so to deserve general attention. If I had not suppressed the greater part of these, my two small volumes would have swelled to folios. To have suppressed them all, besides defeating my main design, would have made the little remainder appear harsh and stiff; would have given the letters an air of declamation, and have destroyed that freedom which is essential to the epistolary style. It is difficult to draw the exact line, and to fix the proper medium; and especially so to me, on a subject in which I am so nearly concerned, and on which I could not well consult my friends. I have kept this difficulty in view through the whole, and have acted to the best of my judgment. What some persons will blame, others may approve, and my books will be open to all. Besides, as the workings and emotions common to the human heart are much fewer than the various events and occasions that may excite them; some account of my own feelings, under certain circumstances, may apply to the feelings of others in their more important affairs.

To my more serious readers, I may well apologize for most of the letters of an early date; which I should certainly be ashamed of now, if they were printed by

themselves. But as I began to *write* about the same time that I began to *see;* and, in proportion as light increased upon my mind, my letters assumed a graver cast; I was willing to insert such a series as might mark the progress of that spiritual knowledge which the Lord taught me to seek, and which I did not seek entirely in vain. My letters, which at first were trifling, soon became more serious; and, as I was led into further views of the principles and privileges of the Gospel, I endeavoured to communicate to my dear correspondent what I had received. And, in due time, he was pleased to make them a mean of affecting her heart, and impressing her with the same desires and aims. For which mercy I can never sufficiently adore and praise him.

If they who think lightly of marriage, or who chiefly engage in it upon interested motives, preferring the wealth, and pomp, and glare of the world to a union of hearts; if such persons should treat all that I have written upon the subject as folly, rant, and enthusiasm, I cannot help it. To them, I owe no apology. I only hope they will not be angry with me for expressing a friendly wish that they might be even as I was, excepting the heart-aches and inquietudes that I sometimes felt, which I considered as a price paid (and I thought the purchase not dear) for my satisfaction. Long experience and much observation have convinced me, that the marriage state, when properly formed and prudently conducted, affords the nearest approach to happiness (of a merely temporal kind) that can be attained in this uncertain world, and which will best abide the test of sober reflection.

To infidels, sceptics, and libertines, if such should be among the number of my readers, I cannot expect that any apology of mine, for what might be justly excep-

tionable, would be either acceptable or sufficient. They will be glad if they can pick out any sentiments, either false or trivial, to exhibit as specimens of the whole. Yet I have something to say to *them;* not in a spirit of defiance, but of meekness. These characters were once, alas! my own. Had my abilities and opportunities been equal to the depraved taste of my heart, I should have rivalled Voltaire himself. My own experience convinces me, that nothing short of a divine power can soften that mind which, after having stifled repeated checks of conscience, has renounced revelation, and is hardened like steel by infidelity. I know the gall and bitterness, the effects, and the awful danger, of that state. Such persons are entitled to my compassion and my prayers; if, peradventure, it may please God to give them repentance, to the acknowledgment of the truth. It is not the smallest evil resulting from this malignant poison, that they who are infected by it, cannot be content with going on in their own way alone; but usually labour, with a zeal almost equal to that of a martyr, to draw others into the same path. There is a something within them which will, at times, remonstrate and recoil, in defiance of their utmost efforts. At such seasons, (like children in the dark,) unless they have company, their spirits will flag. This prompts them to employ every art of sophistry and dissimulation to gain proselytes.

Historical deductions and learned arguments are not necessary to evince the truth of the Gospel. It proves its own importance by its obvious tendency, and by its uniform effects. Let a thinking man suppose, for a moment, that the motives, hopes, and rules proposed in the New Testament, were to be universally understood, cordially embraced, and strictly observed,

to-morrow; the sure consequence, that a change equally universal, in the general habits, tempers, and pursuits of mankind, would likewise to-morrow take place, must force itself upon his mind. The wilderness would become a garden: fraud, violence, discord, oppression, and profligacy, would instantly cease; order, justice, peace, benevolence, and every branch of morality, would instantly flourish. Men would live as brethren, and treat each other as they could equitably expect to be treated themselves in similar cases. Such are the *actual* effects, where the Gospel is truly received. How many who, like the man possessed with a legion, or like me, were miserable and mischievous, a burden to themselves and to their friends, and a nuisance in the community, have been, and still are, brought to their right minds, rescued from the tyranny of contending inordinate passions, and taught to fill up their places in society with decorum and usefulness! The Gospel, thus embraced, is presently found to be exactly suited to the wants, desires, and forebodings of the human heart. It adds a relish to all the comforts of life; diminishes the pressure of afflictions; affords a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care; and enables the believer to meet death with composure, dignity, and hope.

How ungenerous then, how cruel, are they who endeavour to rob us of this precious *depositum*, when they have nothing to propose as a substitute? But, blessed be God, their attempts are no less vain than desperate. They may blind the eyes of a few, but they cannot deprive the sun of its light.

Such is the power of guilt and fear to alienate the mind from God, that they who would tremble to be seated in a carriage drawn by unruly horses, with no

one to manage the reins, are reduced to deny a governing providence of God over all his creatures, and especially over mankind. They think it less uncomfortable to suppose, that the contingencies to which we are liable, in such a world as this, are the mere unavoidable result of second causes, than that they are under the direction of Him whose almighty power is combined with infinite wisdom and goodness. For they know and feel, that if there be a God, if he be wise and good, and if he takes cognizance of the hearts and actions of men, they have every thing to dread. From persons of this stamp, I can expect no favour. I once thought, or wished, as they do; but the divine Providence, which I long denied and defied, convinced me of my error by multiplied merciful interpositions in my behalf. May the like mercy and compassion be extended to many others who, at present, know not what they do!

I return from this digression. My views in sending these letters abroad, are chiefly four:—

1. As a public testimony of the thanks which I owe to the God of my life, for giving me such a treasure; for uniting our hearts by such tender ties, and for continuing her to me so long.

2. As a monument of respect and gratitude to her memory. She was my pleasing companion, my most affectionate friend, my judicious counsellor. I seldom or never repented of acting according to her advice. And I seldom acted against it, without being convinced, by the event, that I was wrong.

3. I hope to show by the most familiar kind of proof, *example*, that marriage, (when the parties are united by affection, and the general conduct is governed by religion and prudence,) is not only an honoura-

ble, but a comfortable state. But, from what I have felt, and what I have seen, I am well assured that religion, by which I mean the fear of God, a regard to his precepts, and a dependence upon his care, is absolutely necessary to make us comfortable, or happy, even in the possession of our own wishes. The fairest prospects, unless founded upon this basis, may be compared to a house built upon the sand, which may seem to answer for a time, while the weather is fine; but which, when tried by the storms and floods, the changes and calamities inseparable from the present state of things, will sooner or later fall, and involve the builders in confusion and distress.

4. I likewise hope, that my example may prove a warning to others, who set out with warm hopes of satisfaction, to be cautious of an over-attachment to their creature-comforts. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ.* My sharpest trials, and my most pungent causes for repentance and humiliation, through life, sprung from this source!

LETTERS TO A WIFE.

1750.

FIRST VOYAGE TO AFRICA.

St. Alban's, May 19.

My Dearest,

I could have reached Dunstable to-night, but I remembered that you had desired me not to ride late.

I think I fully obeyed you in not saying much when I took my leave. My heart was really too full; and had I been more able, the fear of increasing your uneasiness would have prevented me. Were I capable of describing all the tender sentiments that have occurred since we parted, an indifferent person would allow me to be master of the *pathetic*. But I cannot express what I feel. Do me the justice to believe my affection goes beyond any words I can use.

I purpose to set off early to-morrow, and to attend service at church somewhere on the road; which I do not care to miss without necessity. But now I am particularly desirous of improving the first opportunity to implore, in a solemn manner, the protection of Divine Providence, that we may be favoured with a happy meeting.

Gracious God! favour me and my dearest M**** with health, and a moderate share of the good things of this life! Grant that I may be always happy in her love, and always prove deserving of it! For the rest, the empty gewgaws and gilded trifles, which engage the thoughts of multitudes, I hope I shall be always able to look upon them with indifference.

I make no apology for this serious strain. Believe me, I write experimentally; and to the degree that I love you, I could not bear to be torn from you in this manner, if I was not supported by my principles; which teach me that I ought to be not only content, but thankful that things are so well with me as they are, and to expect no pleasure in this life without some abatement. I believe there may be persons who can keep themselves in tolerable good humour, by the strength of their own minds, in a course of prosperity; but when crosses and disappointments take place, or when they are constrained to part from what they hold most dear, if they cannot call in religion to their aid, they usually sink and despond. At least I have always found it so.

I have a good horse and a good road, and pretty good spirits likewise, considering that the more haste I make, the more I increase my distance from you. But when I reflect, that now your interest, as well as my own, calls me away, methinks I can scarcely go fast enough.

I am likely to perform the whole journey alone; but I want no company. It will always be a full entertainment to me, to recollect how very happy I have been in yours, and to animate myself with the pleasing hope, that in due time I shall be so again.

I am, &c. inviolably yours.

Liverpool, May 27.

I was forced to defer writing so long on Friday, that I was constrained to leave a thousand things unsaid, I therefore begin now in time. When you write next, (which I beg may always be by return of post,) let me know at what hours you usually rise, breakfast, dine, sup, and go to bed, that I may keep time with you, or, at least, attend you with my thoughts, if I should be otherwise engaged.

I cannot inform you that I have a ship yet; no one offers at present which Mr. M**** thinks good enough. Oh! that it was possible for you to go with me where I go, to cheer and enliven me amidst fatigues and difficulties, without sharing in them! How light would they then seem to me! But I submit. At least, happen what may, it will give me pleasure to think that my better, dearer part, is in safety at home.

I have now received yours of the 24th, and kissed it a hundred times! I beg you not to give way to uneasy apprehensions for me: for while you are well and easy, I am as happy as I wish to be during my absence from you. I should be sorry to find this absence become more easy to me by time. Let it suffice that I eat, drink, and sleep well, and am in health and spirits to do every thing that may appear necessary to procure us a future happy interview.

I acknowledge that at intervals, and when alone, the recollection of the past almost overpowers me with a tender concern; but do not be grieved for me, for I find a pleasure in the indulgence of such thoughts, which I would not part with upon any less consideration than that of being actually with you. I have

written myself into tears now, and yet I feel a serenity and satisfaction, of which, till I could call you mine, I had no perception. I cannot bemoan your absence without remembering, at the same time, how happy, and how long happy, I have been with you. This is a kind of bank stock, a treasure of which I cannot be deprived. And while I retain the recollection, that I have been so happy, I cannot be quite uncomfortable. But why do I say, I once was?—I am so still; for the consciousness that you love me, is a present and permanent comfort, and will be so at all times, and in all places. Your love was my principal desire; and, without it, all that you had besides in your power to bestow would have been dull and insipid.

Since you have kindly promised to write by every post, I wish we had a post every day.

Liverpool, June 29.

Though, at taking up the pen, I have not a single sentence ready, I expect something will soon occur, when I write to you. I am going to set you a pattern, how to fill a sheet with nothing, or what is little better than nothing. But as I know you will make favourable allowances, I am content to appear at a disadvantage: I can submit that you should find tautologies and incoherence to excuse, provided I give you no cause to think me ungrateful.—

—Do not think of me as suffering or grieving—rather consider how happy you have made me, and that you have put me into a situation from which I can look upon princes without envy; and that, notwithstanding

my regret for parting with you for a season, I would not change circumstances with any man in the kingdom. Of the many temporal blessings for which I am indebted to a gracious Providence, I set a higher value upon none than this, that I was formed with a heart capable of tender and disinterested affection, and directed to you for the object of it.

I am entirely yours.

Liverpool, July 10.

I MUST be up late to-night to attend the tide; but by writing to you, I can agreeably fill up the time, which might otherwise seem tedious.

I pity those who must fly to company and noise to fill up their vacant hours; and must be always changing the scene, though often for the worse. Whereas I, when I am most retired and solitary, by directing my thoughts to you, have more pleasure than they can conceive of in their gayest moments! I say this the more assuredly, because I have formerly been on the other side of the question; and have sought satisfaction, in that manner of life, with so much earnestness, that I should, at least sometimes, have found it, had it really been to be met with. But I can scarcely recollect an hour of my past life with any pleasure, excepting the time I have passed in your company; and for that I think the innumerable troubles and sufferings I previously underwent not a dear purchase.

I was on shipboard this morning till past two o'clock. The weather was perfectly serene, the moon shone bright, and, having nothing from within or without to discompose me, I passed the hours pleasantly in think-

ing of you. It was with great satisfaction I indulged the hope that you were then in a gentle slumber, under a safe and sure protection, and as free from inquietudes as myself. I then imagined the scene changing to what I must, in a little time, expect; when dark nights, heavy rains, violent winds, mountainous seas, and awful thunder, will sometimes all combine to alarm me. But this anticipation gives me no uneasiness at present; for even then I shall hope, that my dearer, better part, will be as calm and undisturbed as she is now. And as to the other half of myself, now on board the Duke of Argyle, it may be pleased with the expectation of an ample amends at the completion of the voyage. I shall probably at such times often repeat to myself a part of the verses which I addressed to you, at a time when I had little hope of obtaining the happiness I attempted to describe. They were then therefore a mere rant, but they now express my settled judgment and choice:—

> These threat'ning seas, where wild confusion reigns,
> And yawning dangers all around appear,
> I value more than groves or flow'ry plains,
> Since 'tis the only way that leads to her.

Believe me, I should think it well worth the trouble of another journey to London, to have an interview with you, if only for a quarter of an hour. But it must not be, and I submit.

You either misunderstood the latter part of my letter, or I expressed myself awkwardly, which is most likely. I did not mean to say that you were wanting in religion;* I said, or meant to say, that as I thought myself

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* Alas! neither of us had much sense of religion at that time. She was my idol, and perhaps I was her's. We looked little further for happiness than to each other.

not wanting in love, when I first offered you my heart, and yet found afterwards, that my notion of it has been greatly enlarged by a more intimate relation to you; so it might be a happy circumstance if we could be reciprocally helpful in improving each other's ideas of religion. If I seemed to take the upper hand, and affect the dictating strain, I ask your pardon. I ought to be sensible that I am not qualified for it, and to be more ready to learn than to teach.

I am, &c. yours.

Liverpool, July 20.

I RECEIVED your welcome letter of the 17th, which, when I had read it about twenty times over, furnished me with many pleasing reflections; and led me to compare my present state with the low, insipid life I must have led, even in the most affluent circumstances, if my sincere love had not obtained the only adequate prize, a reciprocal affection from you.

I am still of opinion that, at first, compassion and generosity induced you to think favourably of me. It did not suit with your temper to be unaffected by the pain and uneasiness of any one, much less of one who, though under a thousand disadvantages, you had reason to believe really loved you. And, if I am not mistaken, you used some constraint with yourself, in the beginning, to bring your inclination to coincide with the power you had to make me happy. Thus I thought when I received your hand in marriage. Yet I was no less easy and secure, than if I had made the most successful improvement of our long acquaintance in gaining your heart. For I knew you too well to fear

that after you had gone so far, you would stop short, till your affection was equal to my own.

I was pretty well assured in my own mind, that I should make it the chief business, or rather pleasure, of my life, to study and seize every opportunity of obliging you; and I was no less certain that the most trivial instance of such an intention would not be overlooked by you, or lost upon you. The event has answered my expectation. I have now the same confidence that you love me, as that I love you; and confidence which I would not exchange for any consideration the world could offer; a confidence which renders me superior to all the little entertainments that would allure me while I am here, and which I hope will satisfy and cheer me when, in a few days, I shall leave them all behind me. I long to be gone, for after parting with you, all scenes will be equally indifferent to me, till the happy hour of our re-union.

I thank you for your promise of writing weekly, and you may depend upon my not being behindhand with you. But remember, there is no regular post from Africa, and that the length of the passage of a ship is very precarious. I hope, therefore, you will not indulge discouraging thoughts, if you should not hear from me so soon as you may expect.

The weather has been dark and rainy. It is some time since I saw the north star.* When I am at sea,

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* With this view we agreed upon an evening hour, as a little relief in absence, when we were to look at the north star, if the sky was clear, and be pleased with the probability that we might both be looking at it at the same minute. We knew but little then of the throne of grace, the central point, at which all who love the Lord duly meet (at whatever local distance) with him and with each other.

I shall watch it, at the hour we agreed upon, that I may have the pleasure of thinking that sometimes our eyes and thoughts are fixed upon the same object.

I am, &c. yours.

Liverpool, July 29.

I THINK, if I stay here much longer, I must adopt your method, and follow a long letter with a very short one. For though I always take pleasure in writing, I begin to be ashamed of sending you little more than repetitions. I have expressed my affection (so far as my knowledge of words can express) in so many different forms and phrases, that I am quite at a loss for new ones. I must either write but little, as you do, or to little purpose, unless I begin again, as from the first; and in that case I believe my second round of letters would be very similar to the former, because I write from my feelings. My heart dictates every line.

And though my head often interposes, and observes that this expression is hardly grammar, the next not well turned, the third unnecessary, and so on; yet heart persits in his own way, and whatever occurs to him goes down upon the paper, in defiance of head's wise remonstrances. The contention arises sometimes to such a height, that head tells heart he raves and is an enthusiast. And heart calls head a conceited pedant, whose narrow views are confined to a little nicety and exactness in trifles, because he is a stranger to the emotions of love. As you know which side of the debate I favour, I need not tell you that when my strains are dull, it is none of poor heart's fault, who always does his best to please; but because head refuses to assist

him, and leaves us both to shift for ourselves: though I often tell him that I will neither regard heart, head, nor hands, unless they all consider themselves as belonging to you, and ready at all times for your service, as myself. It seems wrong to say, a man has his heart in his mouth when he is in great fear. I think he may properly be said to have his heart in his mouth, when he is capable of relating, in suitable terms, what really affects him. So, had I my heart at my fingers' ends, I should perhaps write a letter worthy of your perusal. Till then I must beg you to accept what I send, because it is the best I have.

I am yours, &c.

Liverpool, July 31.

I WAS kept some little time in suspense for yours of the 28th, which made it, if possible, more welcome when it came. Yet I am sorry that I hinted any thing to give you an anxious thought upon my account. The pain I complained of in my head, or a much more severe one, would be vastly more tolerable to me, than to hear that you are made uneasy. If it had not been a common thing, and usually soon over, I should not have mentioned it; but was unwilling to be guilty of a short letter, without assigning the true reason. I am much concerned that you should have such a weight upon your mind, and beg you, by all the regard you have for me, to strive against it.

If my dearest M*** will permit me to offer my best advice, and which I propose as a rule to myself—it is this—To endeavour to cast all your care upon Him who has promised to care for us, if we will but put our

trust in him. I long attempted to apply the specious maxims of philosophy, to soften the cares and trials of life, but I found them ineffectual and false; or, however they might have soothed some of the most ordinary and trivial inquietudes, yet I am very sure that, under this aggravated circumstance of separation from you, I should be miserable and without support, if religion did not assist me with nobler and more powerful motives of consolation. I go from you with the less regret, because I leave you in the hands of Him who is able, and, I trust, willing, to preserve you from all evil, and to make every thing easy to you. And I look forward to the various scenes of my intended voyage with cheerfulness, because I am sensible that, in the most remote inhospitable climes, a protecting Providence will surround me, and is no less to be depended on in the most apparent dangers, than in the greatest seeming security.

Let me again and again entreat you not to give way to melancholy; assure me that you will strive to be cheerful, or I protest I shall be unwilling to laugh, or even to smile, lest I should happen to be unseasonably merry when you are sad. Scarcely any thing will inspire me with so much life and spirit, as the hope that you still possess that cheerfulness which used to be so engaging and so natural to you. Let me not have to charge myself with having spoiled your temper, unless you mean to frighten me indeed. I remember that before you quite consented to marry, you told me that I was pressing you to a life in which you should often regret the condition of happy M. C. And I endeavoured to persuade you, that you would only change pleasures, not lose them. I hope, if you will but help

me by keeping up your spirits, I shall be able to make my words good. It will surely be my constant study to approve myself

Your obliged, affectionate, and grateful, &c.

At Sea, August 20.

THIS, I hope, will go on shore by the pilot-boat, to inform you that I am now at sea, and with a prospect of a fair wind. I should be in high spirits but that the thought of being so many months at an uncertainty with respect to you softens me into tears. And your favour of the sixteenth, which I received last night, has renewed my anxiety for you. Let me beg of you to be as cheerful as possible, and to believe that the good Providence which, after a long separation, brought us together last year, when we were less interested in each other, will again join us, to our mutual satisfaction. Once more, my dearest, farewell! May the good God bless you with health and peace, and restore me, at a proper time, to your arms; and for what is to take place in the interval, I would make no conditions, but leave all to Him.

I cannot seal my letter without one more farewell. I need not put you in mind of writing by every probable opportunity. I press to my lips the paper that will be with you in a few days, while I must be kept from you for many months. Adieu.

I am yours, &c.

Ramsay, Isle of Man, August 24.

I COULD not have greater pleasure than in the opportunity which now offers me of relieving your uneasiness on my account. We have already met with unfavourable winds and weather; particularly a violent gale last night, and in a narrow, dangerous navigation. The weather likewise was thick and dark. My own caution and diligence would soon have been of little use; the wind blew so that we could not carry our sails, and there was no friendly port within our power. But my dependence upon God's providence kept me in tolerable peace. I was relieved by the same consideration which I believe distressed my shipmates, I mean, that we could do nothing further.

I felt a persuasion, that if not so soon as we could wish, yet before it was too late, some alteration would take place in our favour. Accordingly, this morning the weather cleared up, and the wind abated, and enabled me to put into this place; where we anchored about two in the afternoon. The wind now rages more than before, and had we continued this night at sea, the consequence (humanly speaking) might have been fatal.

I readily inform you of the danger we have been in, now it is happily over; and hope you will not be alarmed because I am still liable to the like; but rather be comforted with the thought, that in the greatest difficulties the same great Deliverer is always present. The winds and the seas obey him. I endeavour, in every scene of distress, to recollect the seasons in my past life, in which, when I have given myself up for

lost, I have been unexpectedly relieved. Instances of this kind have been frequent with me, some of them perhaps as remarkable as any that have been recorded; particularly my preservation in the Greyhound in the year '48, which can only be accounted for by an immediate and almost miraculous interposition of Divine power. Then I apply the argument of David—The God who delivered me from the paw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, will also deliver me from this Philistine. The God who preserved me from sinking and starving, (from both more than once,) who raised me friends among strangers, when I had disgusted all my own by my follies; and, above all, who has not only afforded me the necessaries of life, but indulged my softest wishes, obviated the many hindrances in my way, and made me happy in you—surely it would be not only ungrateful, but unreasonable, to distrust him now who has done so much for me hitherto.

I would be almost content that you should be indifferent concerning me, during my absence, provided your love might revive upon my return, that so you might experience all the pleasing, and be exempted from all the painful, sensations of a married state. But then I must not know it; for I could hardly bear the noise and impertinence of the world, were I not enlivened by believing myself to be often upon your thoughts.

I confess, at some times, I can hardly acquit myself from the charge of selfishness, that, for my own gratification, I should so earnestly press you to make your peace of mind dependent upon me. That you should be unhappy, and that I should be the occasion of it, would be painful to me indeed! But, I thank God, all

is well hitherto; and if you (as I doubt not) will kindly accept my utmost endeavours to oblige you on our future happy meetings, as a compensation for the anxiety you must now and then suffer, I hope I have not done wrong.

At Sea, September 3.

I WROTE you three letters, while in Ramsay Bay, but could not send the last on shore. We sailed from thence the 29th of August. The fair wind lasted but one day, which was not sufficient to run us clear of the land, and I had some trouble and fatigue till Saturday, when we got a breeze that has brought us into what the sailors call sea-room. The wind is now contrary again, but I have reason to be thankful we are so well as we are. I am at present little more than a gentleman-passenger; I shall, perhaps, have little care upon my head till we arrive in Africa, then I may expect care and trouble in abundance; but all will be welcome upon your account. Therefore, while I have leisure, I shall appropriate an hour every two or three days (sometimes, perhaps, daily) for writing to you, that I may have a sizeable packet ready at a short warning.

At Sea, September 10.

THERE is a strange mixture of pleasure and pain in the life I now lead. When I think of the regard which you express in your letters, (one of which, in their course, I re-peruse every post-day,) I feel a satisfaction which no wealth could buy from me. But when I think of the uneasiness it causes you, I could almost bear to

be forgotten. I know I have said this often, but I must repeat it when you write in a melancholy strain. You charge me, in that which I have now at my lips, with making hours seem more tedious to you than days and weeks did formerly. I am sorry. I beg you to strive to be cheerful.

Though I feel absence painful indeed, I do not deserve much pity, because I am absent for your sake. I am likewise engaged in active business, and have some new scene offering every day, to relieve my mind; besides, I have been long used to suffer, and did not begin to know what peace or pleasure meant till I married you. On the contrary, you, by marriage, exposed yourself to cares and anxieties to which you was before a stranger; and you have done enough to make me happy, if I could be happy alone; but that is impossible. Unless you are happy likewise, money, pleasure, health, nay, love itself, will not make me amends.

At Sea, September 14.

Last post-day I finished a large sheet, and did not leave room to write my name, for I had crowded one hundred and eighty-one lines into it. Should this come first to your hand, you may wonder where I could find subject matter. Nothing (necessary business excepted) seems deserving my attention but religion and love; the one my constant support, the other my constant solace: and was I not favoured with some taste for these, I should find a settled gloom in my heart, though placed in the gayest scenes of life. For at the age of twenty-five, I have seen enough to force my assent to the confession which experience extorted from Solo-

mon in his latter days, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." I mean, all that can be possessed exclusive of these two principles; but under their regulation the scene is changed, and the whole creation blooms with beauty.

Religion, rightly understood, is doubtless sufficient of itself to bear us through all the changes of this world, and guide us to a better. But our gracious Master has made us capable of tender and social affections, to add to the comfort of the present life. I know nothing that is required of us as a duty, but what is both consistent with our happiness, and has a tendency to promote it. Nor is there a single gratification prohibited, that is not, in its natural consequences, productive of pain or disgust. But you will say, why all this to me? You are guilty of no excess, (except your partial regard to me may be deemed one.) I answer, it was a grateful reflection on the goodness of God, and a sense of what I owe him, especially for giving you to me, directed my pen; and to whom could I so properly address these thoughts as to your dear self, since to you I am secondarily indebted for my present peace?

At Sea, September 18.

I SUPPOSE that I am now about half way to Sierra Leone, and not less than fifteen hundred miles from my dearest—a great distance, and hourly increasing! But it is not sufficient to divide you from my thoughts. I have read three more of your letters, and as often as I take them in hand, I have a pleasure in the repeated marks of your affection, which nothing else could afford. Although I am obliged to go to sea, and what

is more, to Guinea, I would not change conditions with the most wealthy bachelor on shore. No fox-hunter can follow his hounds with more alacrity than I now traverse the pathless ocean in quest of a country which, but for your sake, I should be as earnest to avoid. I am obliged to you, not only for the happiness I have found, and hope to find, at home, but for a pleasure while abroad, in what would otherwise be very unpleasant. When I left Africa in the Greyhound, I seemed resolved never to return thither again; but my resolution was formed when I had no hope that you would ever make it worth my while; and I knew that nothing else could. But upon the encouragement (though slender) which you gave me when I arrived there in the Brownlow, every thing appeared with a different aspect. And though, perhaps, few persons in the same space of time, have met with more dangers and hardships than I then did, I believe no one heard me complain; because, what I had in view upon the end of the first voyage, so fixed my thoughts, that I could consider nothing as a real hardship that had a probability of being acknowledged and rewarded by you; I ventured all upon your honour, and was not disappointed. If the bare hope of your love was such a support, judge, if you can, how the proofs I have since obtained of it must influence me!

At Sea, October 16.

I AM much obliged to Mr. Addison, from whom I took the hint of setting apart stated times for writing to you, and reviewing your dear letters. This expedient is a great relief in your absence. When I awake in

the morning, if it be what I call a post-day, I am no less pleased than children are with the thoughts of a fair-day.

We have not yet seen the land, but I deem myself within one hundred miles of the Bananas, which is the first place I propose to call at. There I spent a part of my wretched time in thraldom, of which you have often heard me speak.

Little did I think, in my sorrowful days there, when I went almost naked, so that my skin in many parts of my body has been blistered by the heat of the sun—where sometimes I have not had half a good meal in the course of a month, where I was reduced so low as

> ———to be the sport of slaves,
> Or what more wretched yet, their pity.——

I say, little did I think that I should soon revisit that place in a state to excite the envy of those who would once have scorned to let me sit in the same house with them. Still less had I reason to hope that you, whom, in the midst of my distress, I passionately loved, would requite me as you have done. With such a hope, I could have borne all pretty well. But Providence was mercifully intent to make my situation completely miserable for a time, in order to preserve me from that utter ruin into which my folly and wickedness might otherwise have plunged me. I have nothing now to ask, but a disposition to be thankful to Him, the author, and to you, the appointed instrument and mean, of my recovery. I can now look with pity upon all that the vulgar account great and honourable. I pity poor kings, as sincerely as I do a poor beggar; and consider wit, learning, and fame, likewise, as mere trifles,

compared with our mutual love, which may it please God to continue; I was going to say to increase, but that is unnecessary.

At Sea, October 19.

This morning we discovered the land of Guinea. It is exactly four months from the day I took my mournful leave of you. I hope my next post-day's pleasure will be dated from my intended port. The passage from England has not been the shortest, but remarkably pleasant, and free from disaster.

Last night we were disturbed by a tornado, which I believe I have told you is a violent squall of wind, accompanied with heavy rain, thunder, and lightning. The darkness of the night added to the horror of the scene. But with proper care, under the blessing of Providence, these boisterous visitants, though very troublesome, are seldom dangerous; nor do they often last above an hour. At these times my mind is generally calm, when every body, and every thing, is in confusion around me; which is in a great measure owing to my sense of your love, and a hope that you are sleeping in safety. If it please God to permit me a happy return to you, a short interval will fully recompense me for the inconveniences of a whole voyage; and all the rest will be clear again.

If I do but win your acknowledgment, that I am not guilty of the stupid ingratitude too common with many of my sex, who undervalue their most desired blessings, merely because they are possessed of them; but that my regard and behaviour, since our marriage, has been answerable to the professions I made before-

hand—I say, if you believe this, I shall think nothing hard or troublesome, that may confirm your good opinion of me, which I certainly prefer in itself, to all its pleasing consequences; for I am disinterestedly

Yours, &c.

Sierra Leone, October, November.

We arrived here the 24th of October; a hurry of business has forced me to pass ten days without writing to you.

Though this country is not England, it does nearly as well for me in your absence; and, on the other hand, if you could live here with me, without inconvenience to yourself, the gloomy mountains and forests of Sierra Leone would be to me as a *Blenheim*. They who pity me because I am not fond of what *they* call pleasure, know not the motives which render me superior to it. I was once no less eager after their pleasures than they are now. But you have so refined my taste since, that nothing short of yourself can thoroughly please me. As it is midnight, I only add my prayers for your peaceful repose.

Sierra Leone, November 8.

I have enclosed you, under another cover, two sheets of the largest paper, full on all sides, containing near four hundred lines; and I have as much more ready to send by the next opportunity. If it please God to continue my health and welfare, my stock will be still increasing, for I generally devote some time, twice a

week at least, for writing to you. But, for fear any thing should prevent my packet from reaching you, I commit these few lines to the care of Mr. M****.

I think, were I allowed two wishes short of the happiness of being with you, the first should be, that you might have early information that I am well; and the second, that I might have a letter from you, informing me that you were well, and easy, when you wrote. I do not impose upon you by saying that I prefer your peace to my own. I would do or suffer much to obtain a letter from you; and then resign it, unopened, rather than miss one opportunity of writing to you. If I am favoured with any good quality, I think it is a grateful temper, which makes me glad to acknowledge and return the smallest favour I receive, even from an indifferent person. Judge, then, what an effect the many endearing obligations I am under to you, heightened by the ardency of my affection, must have upon me! It is upon this principle that I not only *submit* to the scenes in which I am now engaged, with *patience*, but *embrace* them with *cheerfulness*. Had I been able to live always with you, I think I should not have loved you less; but it would not have been in my power to show it so much. But I hope, now you find that, for your sake, I can take pleasure in my very pain, you will do me the justice to believe, that the confidence you have reposed in me has not been misplaced. I commend you, upon my knees, to the blessing and protection of God.

Bananas, November 21.

SINCE I came hither, I have been cruizing about in the boat in quest of trade, without one leisure evening for writing to you, which has been my chief inconvenience. For the vicissitudes of winds and weather, the scorching days and damp foggy nights, are to me but mere trifles. I have lately had a visit from my quandam black mistress, P. I. [those two letters pronounced distinctly, and not in one syllable, as Pi, exactly sound her name,] with whom I lived at the Plantanes. I treated her with the greatest complaisance and kindness; and if she has any shame in her, I believe I made her sorry for her former ill treatment of me. I have had several such occasions of taking the noblest kind of revenge upon persons who once despised and used me ill. Indeed I have no reason to be angry with them; they were, what they little intended, instrumental to my good. If my situation, at that time, had been more favourable, I should probably have missed you. I may say, with an old Grecian, if I had not been ruined, I should have been ruined indeed!

At Sea, December 3.

THOUGH this is not my post-night, I am willing to write, because I am behindhand, and because it is the most pleasant way of filling up a leisure hour. It was not inclination, but business, that made me limit myself to twice a week, for it would be an agreeable employment to write to you twice a day, if I had nothing to call me off. But, however my hands and head

are engaged, my heart is always with you. It can be but seldom, if at all, that you are out of my thoughts for five minutes together. Whether I am visiting, trading, or watching, your idea is still before my eyes.

I would give something for such a sympathetic needle and dial-plate as is mentioned in the Spectator, that we might be able to correspond without being interrupted by distance. But perhaps I am better without it, for I should hardly attend to any thing else. And we already have what is more valuable, a sympathy of mind and affection. I believe, if we could compare notes, we should find that our thoughts are often engaged in the same manner, at the same time.

Shebar, October 14.

I SUPPOSE you have often observed, for I have, (and, to my credit be it spoken, we think pretty much alike,) that what we very much hope for, or fear, more seldom happens than such things as are quite out of our thoughts, and beyond our prevention. An instance of this lately, I shall mention, by way of change of subject. I went on shore at this place lately on account of trade; and the next morning, walking by the sea-side to look for the ship, she could not be seen. Upon this I sent off a boat, which returned in the evening, and brought me word that they had been some leagues beyond the place where I left her, but could discern nothing of her. I leave you to judge of my anxiety. I could not account for it, the weather being perfectly fine, and we had too few slaves on board to cause any disturbance.

For once, and for a few minutes, I almost wished myself unmarried; for the most sensible part of my trou-

ble was, that, whatever difficulties I may meet with, I cannot now suffer alone. I was at length, in some degree, relieved by the dependence which I always endeavour to maintain upon the good Providence which has done so much for me hitherto.

I put to sea with two boats which I had with me, and after sailing some hours, discovered the ship, when I was upon the point of giving up all hope of ever seeing her again. I soon reached her, and found all well on board. The night I left her had been dark and hazy: she had dragged her anchor and had slipped to sea, and was carried a good way by the current, unperceived by the watch upon deck, who doubtless had been careless, and perhaps asleep. I brought her safely back again yesterday. So that this adventure was only to caution me, and to teach me never to think myself quite secure.

Shebar, December 21.

My Dearest,

Must I imitate the news-writers? They, in a scarcity of foreign news, rather than fall short of their usual number of paragraphs, entertain their readers with relations of strange monsters, apparitions, wonderful sights in the air, or terrible noises under ground. For they take *news*, in the strict sense of the word, to signify any thing that has not been heard of before, whether true or false.

Most of my letters to you remind me of Æsop's feast, which, though consisting of several dishes, were all tongues, only dressed in different ways. Thus, whether I write in a grave or a jocular strain, the sub-

ject is still love, love; which is as inseparable from my idea of you, as heat from that of fire.

Cape Mount, December 31.

I SENT you from Sierra Leone two sheets, like the two I now enclose, and I have two more in readiness for the next ship, and shall think myself happy, if I can employ my leisure to afford you any entertainment. I am apt to grieve at the probability of my voyage proving longer than I expected; but I am soon checked by considering how much cause I have for thankfulness. For I am in perfect health, and have met with no harm or disappointment hitherto. I am informed there is a ship upon the coast which has letters for me; I hope to be with her in a few days. My mind revives at the expectation; for then I shall be able to boast of a real pleasure in your absence, besides that which I find in writing to you. It is now the last night, and almost the last minute of the year, being very near twelve o'clock. How can I conclude the year better than by writing to you, and praying to the Lord to bless you, and to spare me a little longer to love and deserve you, and to be happy with you?

1751.

Rio Junque, January 3.

I WAS prevented writing on Friday by a violent pain in my head, which was perhaps partly occasioned by not receiving a letter from you. I have one from Mr. M****, dated October 24. He promised to let you

know when he intended to write, but I would hope, for my own peace, he neglected it. For I am sure you would not miss the opportunity, if you were able to hold a pen. I must now wait till I arrive at Antigua. Then I hope to be gratified.

When I meet with any thing cross, or contrary to my wish, I dare not now complain; because in gaining you I secured the principal aim of my life: a real good, which, if set in opposition to the little disappointments I meet with from without, outweighs them all. Nor need I envy others their wealth or prosperity, when it is a thousand to one if any of them have such a dear M*** as I can call my own. I should therefore be sorry to change with the very best of them, in all points; or to part with a small portion of your regard for any wordly consideration.

This has been one of the most fatiguing days I have met with, and therefore, though it is not my regular post, I write a little by way of amends. No one, who has not experienced it like me, can conceive the contrast between my present situation, distracted with the noise of slaves and traders, suffocated with heat, and almost chop-fallen with perpetual talking, and the sweet agreeable evenings I have passed in your company. But all is welcome for your sake. I shall never forget, and you doubtless will remember, the evening when you first gave me your hand, as an earnest of what has since followed; how I sat stupid and speechless for some minutes, and, I believe, a little embarrassed you by my awkwardness. My heart was so full, it beat and trembled to that degree, that I knew not how to get a word out. I hope I shall never entertain a fainter sense of the invaluable present you then made me; though a greater intimacy has since restored

to me the use of my tongue. But I am writing in the midst of talkers, and am obliged to answer questions about business, so that my head is too confused to touch upon subjects of this kind, without spoiling them.

Shebar, February 15.

When you think any of my essays more confused than usual, (the best need your excuse,) I beg you to consider, that I was probably myself sensible that I should acquit myself but poorly before I began. Sometimes I am fatigued, at others embarrassed with the business of the day, or destitute of a subject, or unable to collect my thoughts. But I had rather appear to a disadvantage than recede from a good custom. For though I hope my affection is fixed upon a basis which no change of circumstance will be able to shake, yet, knowing the weakness and inconstancy of human nature, I would be always careful not to omit the smallest outward mark of my regard, lest I should in time be so unhappy as to make it a precedent; and lest, from being remiss or negligent in one particular, I might at length prove so in many. For, as it is remarked that no man becomes very wicked all at once, I believe it may be the same with a bad husband; that he begins with inattention to smaller faults, and from thence proceeds to commit greater. Therefore, when you find little else to please you in my letters, I hope they will be agreeable to you, as a proof that, at least I was not unmindful of you, but willing to show my attention to you, if not so well as I could wish, yet in the very best manner I was able.

Shebar, February 20.

Last night (which made it a remarkable night) I dreamed of you. Methought we were walking together, and mutually hearing and relating many things which had occurred since our parting. It was a pleasing illusion; but at day-light the noise of the people over my head broke the charm, and reminded me that, for a time, I must submit to a very different scene. But I seemed more refreshed by my dream than I should have been by a longer sleep.

I sometimes wonder that my sleeping fancy does not oftener transport me to you. Were it true, as some suppose, that our dreams are usually influenced by our employment when awake, I should surely dream of you always. For my attention is seldom so engaged by the most pressing business, as to exclude the thoughts of you five minutes at a time. Perhaps my mind, being so taken up with you when I am awake, is glad to take the opportunity of sleeping when my body does. Yet I well remember that when I first loved you, I dreamed of you, night after night, for near three months successively; though I certainly could not have half the regard for you then that I have now.

Shebar, February 26.

If our correspondence was made public, I suppose many people, who, though married, are strangers to the delicacy of mutual love, would smile at *me* for writing so often, and at *you* for accepting my frequent

and long letters so favourably as I know you will. I pity them no less than they can me.

I could tell those who undervalue only because they do not understand, that there have been men of as much politeness and good judgment as they can pretend to, who have placed much of their happiness in possessing and deserving the affections of a worthy woman. If you understood Latin, you would be much pleased with some letters of Pliny to his wife. He was the first favourite of the emperor, and as a scholar, a courtier, and a philosopher, inferior to none of his age. You may find two or three of them translated in the Tatler, but they fall short of the spirit of the original. But were the billet-doux of our modern fine gentlemen, upon the commencement of an amour, (which is the only time they are desirous of pleasing,) compared with the epistles of Pliny to his Calphurnia, they would appear very trivial and empty. The grateful remembrance of past pleasures, the anxiety and tediousness of absence, the impertinence of all business compared with love, the inquietude of passing a day without a letter, and the promised satisfaction of a happy meeting, are topics which he dwells upon with equal elegance and passion. Having said so much of Pliny, I must add in my own behalf, that I love as well as he did, though I cannot express myself so well; but for plain, downright affection and gratitude, I would not yield to the best Pliny that ever wore a head.

Shebar, March 5.

It was an expression of Cato, that it was more honourable to be a good husband, than a great senator. The point of honour seems to have varied since his

time. We now find too many who value themselves upon a contrary character, and yet are not the worse received in company, not even by those of your sex; who, I think, both in justice and compassion, should unite in despising the man who dares to use a deserving woman ill, because he has not a heart to value her.

But had Cato said, there was more profit and comfort in being a good husband than in being an unmarried emperor, he would have said but the truth. And, however fashionable it might become to dispute or contradict this maxim, there would always be a favoured few, who would not be disputed or laughed out of their experience. And it is only by experience it can be known. We need not wonder, therefore, if a married life is thought lightly of by those who judge of it only by hearsay. For a man might as well pretend to paint a sound, as to describe the various sensibilities connected with a happy marriage, in such a manner as to make a stranger understand them.

Shebar, March 22.

A DESIRE of rendering myself agreeable to you has long been a motive of my conduct. This I may well style my *ruling passion.* I was changeable as the weather till my regard for you fixed me, and collected all my aims to the single point of gaining you. Then my faculties, which before were remiss, were roused, and indolence gave way to application. It has been observed, that those who have wearied themselves in vainly searching after the philosopher's stone, have often found out useful things which they had no thought of seeing. So I, in the pursuit of the methods by which

I hoped to influence you, obtained, unawares, advantages of another kind. The desire of pleasing you, insensibly made me more acceptable to others. In one essential respect the comparison happily fails. These philosophers were poorly rewarded for their trouble by their petty discoveries, while their principal object was still unattained. Whereas I not only found the *means* leading to my chief desire pleasant and profitable, but in due time completely gained my *end*. I long for the opportunity of thanking you again and again.

Shebar, March 29.

The Spectator tells us, that Socrates, in discoursing upon marriage, placed it in such an advantageous light, that he induced all his auditors to marry as fast as possible. And yet it seems he was, at that time, himself wedded to a noted shrew; so that he could hardly draw many persuasive arguments from his own experience. Surely, had he been matched like me, he would have spoken with still greater emphasis. Methinks, if I had his eloquence, I could delight to speak on this subject from morning to night. I could tell the foolish world how strangely they wander from the path of happiness, while they seek that satisfaction in luxury, wealth, or ambition, which nothing but mutual love can afford.

I give and take a good deal of raillery among the sea captains I meet with here. They *think* I have not a right notion of life, and I *am sure* they have not. They say I am melancholy; I tell them they are mad. They say, I am a slave to one woman, which I deny; but

can prove that some of them are mere slaves to a hundred. They wonder at my humour; I pity theirs. They can form no idea of my happiness; I answer, I think the better of it on that account; for I should be ashamed of it if it was suited to the level of those who can be pleased with a drunken debauch, or the smile of a prostitute. We shall hardly come to an agreement on these points; for they pretend to appeal to experience against me. Just so some of the poor objects in Bethlem, while raving in straw and dirt, mistake their chains for ornaments of gold, announce themselves to be kings or lords, and are firmly persuaded that every person who pities them is out of his wits.

Rio St. Paul's, April 17.

May you always feel a satisfaction equal to that which the receipt of your two dear letters last night gave me, and I need wish you nothing further till we happily meet. Could any thing enhance the value of such marks of your affection, it would be my receiving them so unexpectedly. For I had long given them over for lost, or worse than lost, exposed to the ill-bred curiosity of some sea-bear, who, incapable of understanding, much more of valuing, your delicacy, might have insulted them by some shocking jest, to the diversion of his brother animals, over a can of nasty flip. Do not think I extend the direction of Divine Providence too minutely, if I suppose there was something remarkable in my getting them at last, (for they have been transferred to six or seven different vessels successively.) They are of great importance to me: they could not have arrived at a more seasonable juncture

to revive my spirits, which are sometimes a little flagged by the tediousness and difficulties of the voyage. I thank God that I possess them safe, and had the pleasure to find the wax whole, as it came from under your seal. I could almost hug every dirty fellow through whose hands they have passed, for taking such care of them. It will employ me agreeably for some days to answer them periodically, if you will allow the word in that sense—I mean, to comment upon every period.

Rio St. Paul's, April 19.

You wonder that such a smart girl as Miss H**** should throw herself away upon an unsuitable husband. But are you sure that your own judgment has not been often called in question upon this head? It would ill become me to blame her for matching at an apparent disparity, because to such a partiality in your conduct I owe my happiness. And though, upon comparison, I should prove a little more tolerable than he, yet you are so much superior to her, as still to leave a proportionate difference between us. I believe the motives which induced you to give me your hand, are not understood by at least one half of our acquaintance. How often must they have said, "What! the accomplished, easy, polite Miss C**** married to that awkward piece of formality, whose ridiculous behaviour was for years a standing jest amongst us! Strange!" —But I could tell them that you yourself, with all your ease and politeness, were alloyed with a quality almost as singular and unfashionable as any of mine; I mean an artless generosity of mind, upon the knowledge of which I raised my first wishes, and to which I am

indebted for their completion. My love to you occasioned my troubles, my troubles inspired you with compassion, that compassion encouraged me to perseverance, which, long persevered in, induced first your good opinion, then your good-will, and thus, by pleasing gradations, I reached the happy summit of my wishes. That I may be always worthy of my privilege, and that you may be no loser by my gain, is my constant and earnest prayer!

Rio St. Paul's, April 30.

Now for a word of condolence on the catastrophe of poor Fancy. I am really sorry, having a complacence for every thing that has, in any degree, the merit of pleasing you. Besides, he was so good-natured, and had a fidelity and assiduity which might shame many who walk upon two legs. But when I recollect his manner of life, I must, notwithstanding his premature death, pronounce him to have been a happy dog. While many poor puppies have wandered forlorn in the streets, exposed to the gripe of the butcher's surly mastiff, the kick of the weary and peevish traveller, or of the more heavy iron-hoofed horse, and many similar calamities, highly favoured Fancy was brought up within doors, in peace and plenty, and, to say all in a word, indulged with your smiles and caresses. While I—what would I give to be so caressed and smiled upon! If after all this he came to a violent end, many of the greatest heroes have been served so before him. So the mighty Cæsar, after all his honours and success, was seized by mad dogs, (that were fawning upon him a little before,) who bit him (as we are told) in three-

and twenty places, till he died. Cæsar and Fancy equally afford a proof, that no situation in life is perfectly secure. But enough of trifling.

Mana, May 8.

You know the grove where we have sometimes walked together; but where I more frequently passed many hours by myself. I call that grove my chapel, and my study. There I have offered many prayers for your welfare. There I have formed plans for my future conduct, and considered in what manner I might best deserve and return your love. There is not a tree in the whole walk, but, if it could speak, and would speak truth, might bear testimony to my regard for you. For I believe you know that it is my frequent custom to vent my thoughts aloud, when I am sure that no one is within hearing. I have had many a tender soliloquy in that grove concerning you, and, in the height of my enthusiasm, have often repeated your dear name, merely to hear it returned by the echo. These and many other harmless things, which the insensible and the mercenary would term fooleries, I have done; and that not only when a desponding lover, but when a happy one. I am so far from being influenced by that detestable maxim, Possession quenches love!—that I can hardly allow my affection for you before marriage the same name by which I would express (if I could) what I now feel.

Cape Mount, May 7.

I HAVE been through fire and water for you to-day. That is to say, I was exposed for some hours to a more scorching sun than you can easily conceive of; and then cooled, when I landed, by the surf, or violent surges of the sea, breaking upon the shore. I charge all my fatigue to your account, because you only are able to pay me for it; and for your sake it is all welcome. I am now warm with the hope of quitting this troublesome coast in a few days.

Shebar, May 14.

MY last broke off abruptly. I was ill, and disconcerted by an incident in business, which might have had bad consequences. But I am well again, and all is to rights. A happy restoration to you is the principal end I propose, and if I attain it, I am not very solicitous whether my passage homewards be long or short, pleasant or otherwise, so that our meeting be safe and happy at last. The scenes of life I have passed through have taught me a degree of patience and thankfulness, which support me under ordinary troubles; and I hope the God in whom I desire to trust, will preserve me from very heavy ones. I seem persuaded that he who has done so much for me, will, at a proper time, do more, if I do not put hindrances in my own way by impatience and unthankful complaints. In the mean time my assurance of your love is my constant support and feast. I must not expect to slide through life

without meeting any rubs. If it would please God, I could wish to bear all my pains by myself, and to enjoy all my real pleasures with you.

Shebar, May 17.

Though in this country there is no winter, properly speaking, the different parts of the year are no less different than in England. For about seven months the weather is remarkably fair, with light winds, and seldom a threatening cloud to be seen. In the remaining five, we have either incessant heavy rains, or sudden storms of wind, with violent thunder and rain. This uncomfortable season is now commencing, but I hope we shall not suffer much by it, as I expect to sail, and change my climate in a few days. I only mention it as an excuse for any faults in my letters, which I would have you impute to my situation, which I leave you to guess at as well as you can. Two hundred people confined in a small vessel, in bad weather, occasion noise, dirt, and trouble enough. Besides the common business and care incident to other ships, we have a large number of slaves, that must be attended, fed, cleaned, and guarded against, let what will stand still. When I compare a day passed in this manner, with one of the happy days I have known with you, I can scarcely imagine a greater contrast. But when I turn my thoughts forward, and indulge the hope of being restored to you again, that prospect reconciles me to all that is before me.

At Sea, May 24.

At length, my dearest M***, I have lost sight of Africa, and have been three days on my passage towards Antigua. Innumerable dangers and difficulties, which, without a superior protection, no man could escape or surmount, are, by the goodness of God, happily over. I now think myself every hour drawing nearer to you; or, (which is the next comfort to it of which I am capable,) to the receipt of more letters from you, to confirm my prayers for your welfare, and for the continuance of your love. Of the latter I cannot doubt for a moment. I think myself as unalterably fixed in your affection, as I feel you are in mine. This persuasion, so needful to my happiness, is riveted in my heart, and I would not part with it for mines of gold. Yet there is something inexpressibly engaging to read the tender acknowledgment under your own dear hand. You will quite spoil me for a letter-writer. The great beauty of an epistolary style is conciseness; I seem rather to study circumlocution, when writing to you, that I may make some amends in quantity, for what I fall short in the quality of my letters, if compared with yours. It is now ten in the evening. I am going to walk the deck and think of you; and, according to my constant custom, to recommend you to the care and protection of God.

At Sea, June 27.

Sometimes my letters resemble the course of a hare. I digress from one thing to another, till I make

a fair round, and return to the subject with which I began. At other times, like the fox, I lead you a chase right out, leap over all bounds of regularity, and you cannot guess, by the manner of my setting off, whither or how far I may lead you; nor can I tell myself; but fear I tire you to keep pace with my rambles. But if, upon the whole, you are pleased or amused, my end is answered. In this my desultory way, I am almost at the bottom of my twelfth large sheet, and am now expecting to see Antigua every minute, where I hope to be furnished with new materials. I had but two opportunities of writing from the coast, and shall therefore carry eight sheets with me, which I shall disperse homewards as fast as I can, as occasions offer, for my justification, lest you should in some anxious moment suspect me of negligence. Though I rather believe you are disposed to judge favourably of me, even if appearances should be against me. Indeed your idea is constantly with me, and I hope in due time I shall prove the reverse of Esop's dog, and, by long gaping after the shadow, come at length to repossess the substance. Eager as I am for the receipt of your expected letters, my heart goes often pit-a-pat, lest I should hear that you have been ill or uneasy. But I check my fears by considering that I have committed you to Him who is able to take better care of you than I could, if I was present with you. To Him I again recommend you, praying that we may at length be restored to each other, and that I may always prove worthy of your affection.

Antigua, July 4.

As I have been for three nights almost sleepless, I can hardly keep my eyes open, not even to write to you. But I have been long providing against busy times, and now enclose you three sheets as a specimen; and have six more ready to send, as ships may offer. The business of this is chiefly to acquaint you, that I arrived here in safety yesterday, and have received your several favours of the 20th of December, 11th of January, and 2d of April. That which you mention to have written in October has not come to hand. But my joy for those received has been so great, that I have not been at leisure sufficiently to regret the one which is lost. Had not the news of my dear father's death been accompanied by these confirmations of your health, and your affection to me, I should have felt it more heavily, for I loved and revered him. But enough of this. My tears drop upon the paper.

Tell me, my dearest, if you can, how two opposite passions find room for exercise in my breast at the same time? I rejoice greatly in the consciousness of your love, and I sorrow greatly for my father's death. These different emotions seem not to interfere. But I have now given vent to my grief, and shall not indulge it. Religion, which is the best philosophy, has, I hope, prepared me, in a measure, for every event; at least, for all but one: that one, indeed, I cannot think of without trembling.

Antigua, July 5.

You caution me to be careful of my own life for your sake, which is indeed the most engaging argument you can assign; for I know nothing but yourself that makes a continuance in this life very desirable, unless as it is a state of improvement for a better. But, if I durst, I should a little blame the strength of your expressions upon the point. God only knows which of us must depart first; but it is probable, one must survive the knowledge of the other's death. If it should be my lot, I cannot tell how I should be able to bear it; but I would wish our love to be so regulated, that neither of us should be rendered miserable by a separation; but rather be supported by a well-grounded hope, that a few more rolling years would re-unite us, never more to part. In a world liable to such unexpected and unavoidable changes, there is no probability of being happy, even in the enjoyment of our own wishes, unless we hold them in subordination to the will and wisdom of God, who is the author and giver of every blessing.

Your last letter is the best, because the longest, and because you seem to have written it when you were tolerably easy, and at peace in your mind. If this was in any measure owing to hearing from me, I hope you will be peaceful for the remainder of the voyage, for I expect frequent opportunities of writing, and I am not likely to let one of them slip.

Antigua, July 9.

THIS is my fourth letter in five days. I write by every ship, that you may have the most early information possible of my arrival and welfare, to relieve the anxiety which, I fear, you must have felt; and I now send the two last of the eight sheets I brought with me. Should all my packets arrive safely, and nearly together, your love must strengthen your patience, or you will be wearied by the perusal. But I believe you will receive them with as much pleasure as I wrote them. I cannot more strongly express my confidence of your affection. I have, perhaps, told you before, that, when we married, I had not deserved much of your positive love; but I knew, from your temper, that I might be sure your heart was free from any other engagement or preference; and for the rest, I depended on your generosity, and on my own sincere endeavours to deserve you. But even this confidence in myself, and in you, did not induce me to expect you would advance so fast as in a few months to overtake me in the race, in which I set out seven long years before you.

Antigua, July 28.

YOUR last letter has the only additional excellence which I could wish for in a letter from you; I mean the length. You are greatly improved indeed. At the end of five years, with some difficulty, I drew six lines from you. In less than two years afterwards, I obtained eleven lines and a half more. After marriage,

you stipulated to return one line for my two; and though you fell something short of your agreement, I acquitted you; for besides that one of your lines is worth ten of mine, I considered that, at the time of articling, you could not foresee that I should be so unreasonably prolix as I have proved. Could any one who knew us both have imagined that you should already imitate me as far as one hundred and twenty lines? Yes, any one who knew us both, perhaps, might expect it. But if he only knew me, I think he would not. When I say you imitate me, I mean only in the length; for you leave me in full possession of my tautologies, perplexities, and repetitions. I have thought that your writing so correctly was, in some measure, owing to your brevity. But I was mistaken. You have shown me, that as you have the art of imprinting your character and spirit in three or four lines, so you can, if you please, enlarge to as many hundred, without sinking below yourself in a single expression.

I admire the delicate turn of your writing. You need not be careful who sees your letters; for though you touch upon the most interesting subjects in a manner quite intelligible to me, a stranger could pick little out of them. I would imitate you in this, if I could, while conveyances are so uncertain. However, I hope that if my flights were exposed to public view, there would be nothing found but what tended to your honour, though, perhaps, my own prudence might be called in question. I might even be excused by competent judges, but in the crowd we call the world, what a mixture of wonder, envy, and contempt, should I excite! How would they exclaim, This is mere cant, bombast, enthusiasm! I hope most of my poor essays to thank you, have merit enough to meet with such a

reception from the ignorant and selfish. Imagine Handel playing one of his best pieces to a parcel of gypsies, who, till then, had only heard such music as gypsies are accustomed to; would they not gape and stare at him, and wish that he had done tuning his instrument, and would give them something worth their hearing? Or if a clown, who had seen a puppet-show, should go to the theatre, in hopes of something to make him laugh, and hear Garrick repeating the soliloquy, "To be, or not to be," he would probably wonder what the audience could find to admire or applaud in such dry stuff. It grows late, or I could run over fifty more instances of the readiness of people to despise what they do not understand. And then I would endeavour to prove, (I think it no difficult task,) that this folly is never more completely absurd, than when the dull, or the cruel, or the cross, or the unamiable, or the envious, or the selfish, or the abandoned, affect to undervalue the happiness of the marriage state.

Antigua, August 4.

You will perceive by the date, that this is one of the days which I pass, as much as I can, in retirement and reflection. My correspondence with you falls in with my design. I hope a mutual affection will be rather a help than a hindrance to us in our most important concerns. Not one of the many blessings which God has bestowed upon me excites in me a more ardent desire to be thankful than that which he has given me in you. And the remembrance of our past endearments is a powerful preservative, to keep me from low and unworthy pursuits. In like manner, nothing reconciles

me so much to the troubles and hazards incident to my situation, as the thought that I endure them for your sake, and that from you I expect a recompense answerable to my wishes. I hope I may say this, without derogating from those motives which ought to have no less weight with me if you were out of the question. My meaning is, that I ought to be very thankful to the goodness of the Lord, who has thus ordered my duty and my inclinations to go hand in hand, and in a manner bribed me to my true interest. And this enhances my regard to you; that I am not only indebted to you for my pleasures here, but that you will be a mean of preparing me for those which I hope for hereafter. This is the proper foundation for abiding love. A love like mine is calculated for all seasons and changes, equally suited to enlarge the advantages of prosperity beyond the comprehension of a stranger, and to gild the uneasy hours of pain and trouble. I may lose money, health, liberty, or limbs; but while it pleases God to preserve my memory, nothing can rob me of the consciousness that you are mine, and that I am favoured with the dearest place in your heart. The vessel is now under sail, so I must conclude. I hope to follow her soon. Adieu, my dearest! Believe me to be almost continually praying for you, and studying how to approve myself

Yours, &c.

At Sea, August 14.

I AM so pleased with writing to you, and so used to it, that, though I hope to deliver you my packet with my own hand, I cannot desist. I now begin a book for

your entertainment, and shall only mark the date here and there, reserving my bounden subscription to the end.

I suppose most people when entering the marriage state promise themselves much satisfaction; and, I am afraid, very many are greatly disappointed. Why has it been otherwise with me? How was it that at a time when I was mistaken and wrong in every other part of my conduct, I should direct my addresses to, perhaps, the only one in the sphere of my acquaintance who could make me happy? Undoubtedly the hand of God was in it. How wretched must I have been, had my heart been so closely engaged to a giddy, inconsiderate, or mercenary character! Besides my other obligations, I must always consider you as the principal instrument, employed by divine Providence. to wean me from those errors and evils which otherwise must have soon issued in my destruction. This will be a motive of regard which will always remain, though length of time should abate the force of many other endearing considerations; and when life has nothing more in itself desirable, I shall have reason, with my dying breath, to bless God for the influence you have had over me.

You will not wonder that I write in a serious strain, when I tell you that I am sitting by a person in his last agonies, and who, only five days since, was healthy and florid. This is my surgeon, who, by an obliging behaviour during the whole voyage, has gained a great share of my regard. But I fear he must go—cut short in the vigour of life, amidst a heap of amusing purposes and prospects, if he reached England!

August 19.

My poor surgeon is gone, and buried in the sea; a sepulchre of which, while living, he could not bear the thought. But it makes no difference to him now. Besides my personal regard, I shall miss him upon your account. For, from the time I knew him so well as to judge him worthy of the subject, I have often found some relief by venting my mind to him in talking about you. I have none with me now but mere sailors, to whom I should degrade your name if I mentioned it, and shall therefore keep my pleasures and my pains to myself. Yet now and then, when I am sure I am not overheard, I breathe out your name, "My dearest M***," and find music in the sound.

We have had very bad weather lately, and I should have been afraid of a hurricane, (for this is the season,) but that my dependence upon the providence of God is become almost habitual. I have had so many, and such great deliverances, within these few years, that I hope I shall learn, by degrees, to think myself in no more danger in one time or place, than in another, while I am in the path of duty, and do not place confidence in my own abilities, or mistake the means for the end.

August 21.

I submit, with due deference, to your judgment in my own favour, and will entertain as good an opinion of myself as I can, with any regard to truth. Indeed, if I am not better than formerly, by my connexion with you,

I must be quite incorrigible. For a proof that I once was a very poor creature, I could, if you would not be angry, cite your own opinion upon several occasions, and summon more witnesses than two or three. I divert myself sometimes with the recollection of what passed between Mrs. P** and me, when I first saw her after we were married. It was to this purpose:—"Dear Madam, wish me joy."—"Of what, Sir?"—"Of my marriage."—"With whom, pray?"—"With my dear M***."—"What M***! M*** C***?"—"Yes, she owned that name lately, but has now cast it off, and desires you would know her by mine."—"Ah!" says she, sighing and shaking her head both at once, "I wish it was true." Her sister interposed—"He only jests." She answered, "Then he is much altered; very lately he would not have jested upon this subject."—"No, really, it is downright earnest; why are you so backward to credit it?"—"Nay—only—because—I do not know—stay—no—it is impossible." When she had repeated this, or something like it, two or three times, I begged her to collect herself, and give me her reasons. She did not care to speak out, but hinted an unsuitableness of tempers; that you was cheerful and sprightly, and I heavy and dull; and though I might be mad enough to match at a disparity, you were more mistress of yourself than to make such a wild experiment. This she minced up as complaisantly as she could, not to offend me; but I am confident her real sentiments, and those of most of our acquaintance, were as I have expressed.

I told her she had judged rightly of me, but it was plain she did not so well know you. At length she was convinced—but still insisted it was strange, it was passing strange; but that she should love you better

than ever. "With all my heart, Madam," I replied, "and so shall I likewise."

August 28.

When I am in easy circumstances, I try to heighten my pleasure by the recollection of past times, when I have been much otherwise. When I am in a safe harbour, or on shore, I think of past difficulties and dangers. When (as at present) I possess plenty, I recall to mind the seasons when I was destitute of bread to eat, or a shirt to wear. And to sum up all, since I have been happy in a return of your affection, I often compare the state of my mind with what it was when I despaired of gaining it.

I have been lately looking back to the hour when I first saw you, and from thence through all the various turns I met with till you had the goodness to give me your hand and heart; and though you have abundantly made me amends for all my sufferings, I think nothing short of yourself could have satisfied me; and that, to the degree I loved you, I must have been miserable to the end of my life without you.

Do not think I consider you as the whole cause of my wretchedness; you were indeed the *occasion*, but the cause was wholly in myself. I gradually deviated from the principles in which I was educated, till I became profligate and abandoned; and the way of transgressors will always be hard. From this state God might indeed have appointed some other way for my recovery, though I had never known you; but to all human appearance *you* were the instrument of snatching me from ruin. And at last, if you had not been one of a thou-

sand, to conduct the absolute influence you had over me with prudence and caution, we might both have been unhappy.

December 12, 1742, was the memorable day on the event of which my future life was to turn. I was then advancing towardseighteen, you were within a month of fourteen. How wonderful that, when we were both so young, an impression should be made upon my mind almost at first sight, which neither distance nor absence, nor all my sufferings, nor even all the licentiousness and folly I afterwards ran into could obliterate!

I knew not at first what ailed me. I was uneasy when you were absent, yet when you were present I scarcely durst look at you. If I attempted to speak, I trembled and was confused. My love made me stupid at first. I could not bear to leave you; but once and again broke my engagements, and disappointed my father's aim to settle me for life, rather than be banished far from you.

August 30.

In March, 1744, I was impressed, and sent in a tender on board the Harwich. Here I began a new stage of my life. Here I met with a shrewd man, who robbed me of my principles, and poisoned me with infidelity. Then *bad* soon became *worse*. I forsook God, and he left me, for a time, to follow the way of my own heart. I deserted from the ship at Plymouth, when sent upon duty, but was apprehended, brought back like a felon, degraded and punished, as I well deserved. Surely no misery could be greater than mine while I remained in that ship; but at Madeira I was exchanged and sent to

Guinea. In that ship I might have done well, but I would not, and at length thought it eligible to quit her, and to reside on shore in Africa. Here falling sick, and being therefore useless, I incurred the displeasure and contempt of my black mistress, P. I. and soon became the scorn and the pity of slaves. Almost naked and famished, a burden to myself and to all around me, helpless and hopeless, I dragged through almost a year. My outward situation was *then* a little amended; and I thought myself fixed for life, when a message reached me in a most providential manner, inviting me to return to England. The invitation would have been in vain, had it not revived in my mind the possibility (had I considered maturely, it would hardly have amounted to a possibility) of obtaining you. This gleam of hope determined me. If I had not known you, perhaps I should never have seen the coast of Guinea. But it seems more certain, that if I had not known you, I should never have returned from it. Near a year (for so long I was on shipboard) I spent in dreadful wickedness: and I should have come to England as unworthy of you as ever, had it not pleased God to meet with me. Oh! I have reason to praise him for that storm; for the apprehension I had, first of sinking under the weight of all my sins into the ocean, and into eternity, and afterwards of being starved to death. Then I began to think; I attempted to pray, and my first half-formed prayers were answered. He whom the winds and seas obey, in a manner little less than miraculous, brought me in safety to Ireland.

September 2.

When I arrived at Liverpool, not meeting with a letter from your aunt, I thought myself forsaken by her. This, added to the rest of the difficulties which I knew were in my way, made me despair of success; and as I was now become more considerate, I thought it best for us both to break off; accordingly I wrote to her, with a heavy heart, and with watery eyes, that I intended to give you no further trouble. But, upon the receipt of her answer, I was glad to change my mind; and I soon set off for London to see you. See you I did, but little more. I was tongue-tied, as formerly; when I had just feasted my eyes, I returned to Liverpool at almost as great an uncertainty as before; I cannot say quite, for I saw so much generosity in your behaviour, as encouraged me to hope on. And I ventured afterwards to put it to a final issue to yourself by letter. I believe, had you then given me an absolute refusal, I should have endeavoured to conquer, or at least, to smother my passion.

When I received your answer, I kept it some time before I durst open it. When I did, I was transported to find you kind—for though you wrote in the most cautious terms, I knew it was much in my favour that you would write at all, and that you designed I should understand it so. And I was sure you had too much honour and goodness to trifle with me, after I had stated the affair in so serious a light.

Then, my dearest M***, on that very day, I began to live indeed, and to act, in all my concerns, with a spirit and firmness to which I before was a stranger.

My next voyage, though troublesome enough, yet, enlivened by the hopes you had given me, was to me light and easy. And as it pleased God to enable me, in some measure, to act up to my new resolutions, I was, for the most part, at peace every way. I informed you of my arrival at Liverpool, and, upon the receipt of your second dear letter, I set off to try once more what I could find to say for myself: and, as you were then disposed to make your company agreeable to me, I found it so indeed. Such are the outlines of my history, which I will close with thanking you for the invaluable present you made me, on the never-to-be-forgotten first of February, 1750. But I must request your patience while I draw an inference or two from it.

September 5.

And, first, from a frequent review of the past, I learn to be easy and thankful in my present situation. The dispensations of Divine Providence towards me have surely been extraordinary. All the evil I suffered was the immediate result of my own folly and wilfulness; but the good I have experienced was wholly unmerited, and for a long time unhoped for. Had it pleased God to continue my life upon any terms, I ought to be very thankful for it, as allowing me time for repentance. But as though this were a small thing, my wild and roving behaviour has been over-ruled to procure me a better prospect in life, than perhaps I should have obtained by following my proper business from the first with a steady application. And further, as I have reason to think that riches, could I have acquired them, would have been tasteless to me without you, what

sufficient acknowledgment can I make that even this last, best crowning gift, should be added to the rest! Could my wretched course of life, for several years that I pretended to have you so much at heart, entitle me to this blessing? Alas! I was unworthy of you, in every sense of the word.

Since, therefore, so many blessings were in store for me, though I had cast off all fear and thought of the great God; why should I fear, now that I endeavour to acknowledge him in all my ways? I entered upon this voyage with little anxiety, though I well knew it would expose me to many dangers, because I had been protected before, and brought through the like unhurt. I parted from you with grief, it is true, and yet with a degree of cheerfulness; because I trusted that he who brought us together so much beyond my expectations and deserts, would restore us to each other again at a proper time; and, for the same reason, my heart now exults in the hope that the time is nearly approaching. My cares are sweetened with many comforts, and my pleasures, when I meet them, I believe, are with as little alloy as can be expected in this sublunary state.

I infer, secondly, (which I have often mentioned before, but cannot too often repeat,) how great my obligations are to you. I will not compliment you as the first and principal cause, (for that I look higher,) but surely I may consider you as the chief mean and instrument of rescuing me from guilt and misery, and forming me to a true taste for the enjoyment of life. In gaining *you*, I gained all at once. The empty shows of pleasure, which daily ruin thousands, have no more charms for me; and the difficulties and troubles which are, more or less, inseparable from this mortal state, appear light and tolerable for your sake. The only

study now left me (a pleasing study) is, how I may best deserve and requite your goodness. Good night. I am going to look at the north star.

September 6.

I MUST mention one additional circumstance, which demands my thankfulness. I mean the friendship and kindness of the whole family to which I am by you allied. Was it not very happy for me, that I should receive you from those very persons to whom, of all others, I had the greatest desire of being obliged? For I knew it would have been in vain to expect *your* consent, unless it was allowed and confirmed by theirs. By the bye, I should tell you that your unusual observance to your parents gave me some of my strongest hopes, that if we were once joined, we should do well together; for I thought it morally impossible, that the best daughter I had met with, should not prove a good wife. I have seen the peace of some hopeful marriages disturbed, and sometimes destroyed, by dissentions arising from the new relations; but I have seldom seen such entire disinterested harmony as subsists among us.

At Sea, September 9.

IT is now such weather as often makes those who live on shore pity the poor sailors. The wind blows very hard, the sea runs high, and tosses the ship about without any ceremony. So that writing is difficult, and I must be shorter than usual; but I was not willing to desist entirely. For my own part, I do not think my case

very pitiable. I am in good health, I am surrounded by a good Providence, to which a calm and a storm are alike; and, as the wind is fair, every puff pushes me nearer to you. I have shortened the distance between us about one hundred and eighty miles within the last twenty-four hours. Who would not purchase this speed (if it could be bought) at the price of a little inconvenience? Not that I am anxiously in haste. I am willing to make the best use, both of fair and of contrary winds, and if possible, with equal thankfulness, for I trust all my concerns are under a better direction than my own, and that you and I shall meet again, in the best concerted hour and manner imaginable.

At Sea, September 16.

The scene is much changed since yesterday. The wind is abated, and the raging billows are greatly subsided. I thank God we did not sustain the least damage, though such seasons are not without real danger; for the force of the sea, when enraged by the wind, is inconceivable by those who have not seen it, and unmanageable by those who have seen the most of it. God is often pleased to make this element his instrument of confounding the pride of those who presume to think their own art, vigilance, and precaution, a sufficient security against it; while at the same, or at a worse time, he makes the use of common means successful, to such as acknowledge that their best endeavours must be in vain without his blessing.

It is a common error to be much afraid in times of great apparent danger, and only at such seasons. In a tempest, a fire, a pestilence, or an earthquake, we are

alarmed, and cry, Lord help us, and give ourselves up for gone. But, alas! were our frail lives any way inconsistent with the views of Providence, there is no need of such a mighty apparatus to remove us. A fever, a fall, a fly, a tile, or even a hair, are, and have been, sufficient to interrupt the schemes of the ambitious, to rob the conqueror of his triumphs, or to change beauty into a loathsome mass.

These thoughts have arisen from a grateful sense of my late preservation, and there is a propriety in offering them to you. I owe to you the most that endears life to me. I ought to be thankful for its continuance, though it were not thus enlivened, as a state of improvement and preparation for a better: but for any happiness merely temporal, further than what shall be allotted me through and with you, I have neither conception nor desire. Further than this I dare not say. God forbid that either of us should mistake the mean, his goodness in blessing us with affections so happily attuned to each other, for the end to which it ought to lead us; so as to place an undue stress upon what must be either taken from us, or we from it. Since we are sure we must at length part, let us endeavour that it may be upon such terms as may afford us, mutually, the joyful hope of a re-union, when we shall no more be liable to separation or disappointment. This must be happiness indeed!

At Sea, September 19.

I AM a great admirer of Æsop's fables. They could hardly have been more adapted to the customs and humours of our times, had they been written in London. His apes, lions, foxes, geese, magpies, and monkeys, may

be met with in our streets every day. As a proof that I am not partial in my censure, I will confess that I myself have frequently appeared in some of these characters. When I first knew you, I was a bear; I then became an owl, and afterwards exhibited the worst properties of *all* these brutes in my single self.

The morals, so called, usually subjoined to the fables, I think might be omitted without much loss. Let the reader moralize for himself, as I mean to do on a fable which commonly stands the first in the book. I must give it you from memory, and believe I shall not much deviate from the original:

"A cock, scraping in a dunghill, found a diamond.—Oh! said he, what a fine bright thing is this! a jeweller would be overjoyed to find it; but, for my part, I think it a mere bawble, and, would prefer one barley-corn to all the diamonds and pearls in the world!" Is not this a lively picture of some who would be thought fine gentlemen! In taste, discernment, and employment, how nearly do they resemble the cock! Solomon assures us, the price of a virtuous woman is above rubies; which sufficiently explains what is meant by the diamond. Thus the libertine judges of a fine woman, every way qualified to make a man of sense happy. He will, like the cock, allow that she is worth much to one who knows how to value her, (for beauty joined with goodness in a female character, will extort some homage from the most brutish.) I must own, he would say, she is very amiable; and, if a man should gain her who can relish the good sense, tenderness, and generosity she seems to possess, he would, to be sure, think himself very happy; but these things are to me mere bawbles. If I have my barley-corn I shall not envy him. My bottle and a brothel are more to my taste. Thus far my moral.

How is it that women, who profess a regard for honour, truth, and virtue, will, without scruple, converse in general terms with men who live in open defiance to these principles, if they are only recommended by a genteel address and appearance; and will permit them, upon the easy condition of avoiding gross, vulgar terms, to say things which they must surely despise? If they would resolutely treat with contempt the man who should dare to hint, that he considers all women as alike, it would prevent the ruin of many of your sex, and be the most effectual step towards a reformation amongst ours that I can think of. But now, let a wretch, by a complicated scene of perjury, baseness, and ingratitude, first ruin, and then abandon, a young creature who has been so unhappy as to believe him, he will probably be received in the next company with a smile, and marks of good will; while the poor dupe of his artifice, deprived both of peace and subsistence, shall be deemed unworthy of pity; and this from women who ought to be the patterns of commiseration and candour!

You, I know, think more justly. You do not suppose, that your having withstood or escaped all villanous designs, can warrant you to add weight to the affliction of those who have been over-reached. I may say of you, with the poet,

> There dwelt the scorn of vice, and pity too.

I know not what I should digress to next, but I am just told, the tea-kettle boils; so, as the sailors say, no more at present.

September 20.

We have another heavy gale of wind, and it is not easy to sit fast, or to hold a pen; but as the distance between us is lessening at the rate of seven or eight miles per hour, I am willing to fill up my paper as fast as I can. I wish I had words to convey some idea of the scene around me; but it cannot be fully described. A faint, and but a faint conception may be formed from pictures, or prints, of a storm at sea. Imagine to yourself an immense body of water behind you, higher than a house, and a chasm of equal depth just before you: both so apparently dangerous, that you could hardly determine which to venture; and both so near, as not to allow you a moment's time to choose: for in the twinkling of an eye the ship descends into the pit which is gaping to receive her, and with equal swiftness ascends to the top on the other side, before the mountain that is behind can overtake her. And this is repeated as often as you can deliberately count four. It is indeed wonderful, that a ship will run incessantly over these hills and dales, for days and weeks together (if the gale lasts so long) without receiving the least damage, or taking any considerable quantity of water on board; and yet never be more than four or five yards from a sea which, if it was quite to reach her, would perhaps disable her beyond recovery, if not beat her to pieces at a single blow. Need we go further for the proof of a Providence always near, always kind, kind to the unthankful and the evil? For though these marks of his care are repeated every minute, they are seldom acknowledged by seamen. For my own part, I see

dangers so numerous and imminent, that I should be always in anxiety and fear, could I not submit myself and all my concerns to Him who holds the waves of the sea in the hollow of his hand, as the prophet strongly expresses it; so that when most enraged by the winds, I am sure they dare not rise a single inch beyond his permission.

You have often heard of an ostrich, and perhaps seen one. This bird is common in the northern parts of Africa; and, if travellers may be believed, he has a peculiarity which, if my friend Æsop had known, he would, I think, have given him a place in his fables. They say, when an ostrich is pursued, he usually gets clear by running, if the place is open and plain; (for they are swifter than a horse;) but if he be near an enclosure or wood, he sticks his head into the first bush he can reach, and when he can no longer see his enemy, he thinks himself safe, and stands quiet till he is caught. We may smile at this folly in a bird, but how often is it an emblem of our own! When the thing we fear is impending, and before our eyes, we are alarmed; but soon drop our apprehensions, and perhaps are unwilling to own we had any, when the danger is over, as we suppose; that is, when we cannot see it. Our own wisdom, or diligence, or vanity, serve us for a bush; and we little think of the many calamities to which we are equally exposed from other quarters; though we daily see more people suffering by what they slighted, than by what they feared. May you and I learn to fear the Lord, and we need fear none but him. He could preserve us safe and happy, though fire and air, earth and water, men and devils, were to conspire against our peace.

September 21.

How different is to-day from yesterday! The sea hardly seems to be the same element. The weather is quite fair, the wind moderate, but still favourable, and the water smooth. When the country is loaded with snow, and the trees without a leaf, how pleasing is the alteration produced by the returning spring! The ground, by degrees, is covered with flowers, the woods arrayed in green, and music is heard from every thicket. Seamen often experience as great a change in a few hours, which makes it the more sensible. A little bad weather, now and then, makes the return of fair more pleasant. I seem to-day to breathe a new air, and with a new life.

You are very kind to wish yourself at sea with me; but dearly as I value your company, I could not consent to pay such a price for it. I can easily submit to the inconveniences of a seafaring life while you are safe on shore; but they would distress me greatly if you were affected by them. I am like a prudent merchant who, not willing to risk his whole fortune in one adventure, leaves the better and larger part of his riches at home; and then, if any thing happens, he can comfort himself with the thoughts of a reserve.

Excepting the pain of your absence, (which I hope I shall always feel when from you,) I have little to disquiet me. My condition when abroad, and even in Guinea, might be envied by multitudes who stay at home. I am as absolute in my small dominions (life and death excepted) as any potentate in Europe. If I say to one, Come, he comes; if to another, Go, he flies.

If I order one person to do something, perhaps three or four will be ambitious of a share in the service. Not a man in the ship must eat his dinner till I please to give him leave: nay, nobody dares to say it is twelve or eight o'clock, in my hearing, till I think proper to say so first. There is a mighty bustle of attendance when I leave the ship, and a strict watch kept while I am absent, lest I should return unawares, and not be received in due form. And should I stay out till midnight, (which for that reason I never do without necessity,) nobody must presume to shut their eyes, till they have had the honour of seeing me again. I would have you judge, from my manner of relating these ceremonials, that I do not value them highly for their own sake; but they are old established customs, and necessary to be kept up; for, without a strict discipline, the common sailors would be unmanageable. But, in the midst of all my parade, I do not forget (I hope I never shall) what my situation was on board the Harwich, and at the Plantanes.

September 25.

While I am writing, the ship keeps running towards you. The wind has been mostly fair for more than a week. Sometimes I almost fancy myself in a dream, and think, Can it indeed be possible, that I am within a few weeks of so much happiness as a return to you includes? Perhaps I may find you ill—perhaps I may not reach you at all, near as I think myself. Hundreds have perished much nearer home. But all dark thoughts give way to my dependence upon God. I know I do not deserve so great a blessing as to be restored to you

again; but neither did I deserve to be blessed with you at first. I hope, arrive when I will, I shall bring home a disposition to be thankful. I have advanced about eight hundred miles this week. How many deaths and dangers have I escaped in that space! Why then should I fear these that are still before me, if I am always under the same protection?

At Sea, September 26.

The weather is at present very cold, wet, and windy; but, I thank God, my heart is warm and calm. I think of past times, when I have been happy with you, and I count nothing a hardship that does not interfere with my hope of being so again. I would not wish to fix the hour myself, because I cannot choose for the best. I suppose myself about three hundred and fifty miles from Ireland, and I have at times been too impatient to see it, because I should be so much nearer to you. But were we now very close to the land, I might perhaps wish myself far out at sea again; for the wind, in its present degree and direction, which is only inconvenient here, would there be dangerous. How often have I found, that the accomplishment of my own short-sighted designs would have been to my hurt! And yet, alas! I feel it difficult to submit my concerns to a superior management, though I am convinced, in my judgment, that I could not order them so well myself. The story of the Fairy who would never assign a reason for what she did, but always did right, though some of her proceedings appeared to contradict her promises, I think well suited to illustrate the conduct of Divine Providence, which will surely do us good, if we can

humbly trust it, without nicely examining the aptness of the means by which it works. Dr. Parnell's Hermit is a still more solid and satisfying illustration of this subject. How miserable, for instance, must both you and I have been, if my desire had succeeded before I had a little learnt how to treat and value you? And how unlikely was the path that I trod for several years, to lead me to your possession? And though I should have thought myself happy, could I have avoided the necessity of leaving you for the long term of this voyage, yet I am assured, that when we are permitted to meet, we shall both derive advantages from the separation.

The ship has so many motions, that writing (unless to you) would be quite troublesome. So I shall leave off, though I cannot say the tea-kettle boils, nor am I sure that it will, for the sea often puts the fire out. But if you drink your tea in peace, I can make a good shift without any.

At Sea, October 2.

I HAVE been prevented from writing in the day, so must try my eyes by candle-light. Indeed, at present, I could not write with pleasure to any one but yourself; for, as I expect every hour to see the land, my head is full of the charge of a ship valuably laden, and the lives of many people intrusted to my care. Not that I have more anxiety than is needful to make me use my best endeavours. For the success of the whole, I can with some comfort depend on the good providence of God; but I must not presume to be preserved by a miracle. It is sufficient if my best diligence is permitted to answer the proposed end; which, of itself, I am sure it

cannot do. The innumerable possibilities of miscarriage to which a ship is liable, are far beyond the reach of human foresight or prevention. It is my mercy to be convinced of this, and, at the same time, to be able to look higher for protection.

When Cæsar was once at sea in a storm, and the mariners themselves were startled at the danger, he is reported to have said, "Fear nothing, you carry Cæsar and his fortune." Perhaps I may, with less presumption than he, take some comfort in the thought of my own importance; for though, strictly speaking, I am a mere nothing, I hope I may rank myself with those to whom all things are promised to work together for good, and that my best interests are fixed upon a foundation that cannot be shaken. When I do give way to fears or wishes of a temporal kind, I think it is chiefly on your account. I would be thankful for life, but am in some measure freed from the dread of death, further than for the grief it would occasion to you. I ought to strive to get the better of this thought likewise; but I have not yet attained. In the wretched, unthinking part of my life, I was full of fears, which I do not now wonder at. The wonder is, how any one who lives as I then did, can be otherwise. Surely the sudden and various passages from this world to the next, must shock those who have nothing to hope for, but every thing to fear, by the change. The wicked flee when no man pursueth; the shadow of danger discomposes them; and whatever boasts they may make of their courage, it most commonly fails them when most needed, unless they have hardened themselves beyond the power of reflection. But the righteous are bold as a lion. No difficulty can overpower their resolution when they are in the path of duty.

Were some gay ladies of your acquaintance to read what I write, they would call much of it stuff, and preaching; and admire that you have patience to read it. Perhaps a time will come, when such will wish they had thought as you do. However, I do not write in this serious strain for your perusal only, but for my own; to quicken my remembrance of the past, when I shall be restored to you, and be in a state of more apparent safety; in hopes that these passages may contribute to the forming of my behaviour *then*, answerably to my deliberate and cool judgment of things *now;* that I may not be like the sailor who once, in great distress, made a vow to the Virgin Mary, that if she would deliver him, he would present her with a wax-candle as big as the ship's mainmast; and on being asked how he would raise money to pay for so large a candle, he said, "Let us first get on shore, and then the saints will not exact too strictly upon a sailor's promise."

At Sea, October 3.

What a tasteless, unpleasant voyage would this have been, if you had not secured my happiness before I came out, and given me something to remember, and something to hope for, that has supported me at all times; and yet you denied me at first with so grave a face, and had such absolute command over me, that I had almost taken you at your word. I may be obliged to Mrs. H.'s advice, that I did not fairly give up my suit; though, upon second thoughts, I believe it was more owing to my opinion of your generosity. For I thought, that to send me away empty again, would

argue a selfish caution, of which I could not suppose you capable, without wronging you. So I ventured to touch again upon a subject on which you had positively enjoined me silence. And I remember you forbade me again, but I thought you did not speak in so peremptory a manner as before. In a little time you heard me without interrupting me, and from thence proceeded to argue and object, in a cool, conversible strain. When it came to this, I promised myself success. I remember that line,

The woman that deliberates is *gain'd*.

I then began to press my point more closely, till you actually yielded, and gave me your hand in consent; which, though I had been so long entreating for, I could not receive without trembling and surprise. I could hardly think myself awake. I never till then was sensible of the force of my love; and I slept that night with a content and sweetness which I had not known before. I often recollect these circumstances, and the much ado I made about you before marriage, to make me careful that my behaviour now may be suitable to my former professions. But, I thank God, it does not require much care or pains; for to do all in my power to please and oblige you, seems as natural to me as it is to breathe.

Liverpool, October 8.

The news of my arrival will make this letter, however faulty, welcome to you. I could not write, at present, to any one but yourself. I am over-fatigued, having

been incessantly waking for four days and four nights, which once brought on a temporary delirium, though not so violent as to prevent my knowing what I said or did. But almost every thing I thought of (yourself excepted) seemed to be present before my eyes. But since I came here I have had a good nap, which has much refreshed me, and I hope to be quite recovered to-morrow. In other respects I am in perfect health.

I hope to set out for London as soon as the ship is discharged; but cannot be yet sure. Should another voyage be proposed immediately, I must beg you to submit to the inconvenience of a long journey in the winter; for, now there is no ocean between us, we must not be separated, no, not for a single hour, without necessity. But I rather hope, and expect, that the lot of travelling will fall to me.

I hope you will rather be pleased with the knowledge of my being now so near you, than be grieved that we must wait a little longer before we meet. For my own part, I have so strong an impression of the dangers I have mercifully escaped in the course of the last week, that I dare not complain of a little delay; and when the post shall bring me an assurance of your health and peace, I shall cheerfully wait the ordinary course of things.

Liverpool, October 11.

In about fourteen days from this date I hope to be preparing for London. Mr. M**** says, that about March I may expect to be summoned again; and then he hopes to see you with me, and that he will be glad to make his house an agreeable home to you, and charge

himself with the care of returning you to London, if you do not choose to reside in Liverpool while I am abroad. Mrs. M**** likewise wishes to see you. She thinks she pays my judgment a compliment, in forming a favourable idea of you beforehand. I smile, and say nothing. She will perceive, when the time comes, that any opinion of you, derived only from the knowledge of what I am, must greatly wrong you.

Many welcome me home; but, alas! Liverpool without you, is almost as poor a home to me as the wildest part of Africa. I only say almost, because I am much in Mr. M****'s family, and when there, find some alleviation of your absence. All the rest is wearisome and tedious. I enjoy myself best when retired in my room, and especially when I am writing to you.

Liverpool, October 13.

If I could write a quire, I should be unable to express my pleasure on the receipt of your dear, punctual favour of the 9th. It is like your kindness, to offer to meet me upon the road, but I beg you to spare yourself the trouble. I do not even desire you to come to London, as I have no business to detain me there, and I should be under some restraint at the house of an acquaintance. The pleasure of having our first interview quite at home, amongst ourselves, seems worth waiting for a few hours. I am glad you made yourself quite easy upon the news of my departure from Antigua. But now I am safely arrived, I may venture to tell you, that my passage homewards at this time of the year (the hurricane season) was the most apparently dangerous part of the voyage: I thought it so before I

sailed; and yet I ventured to foretell a happy arrival; because I trusted to that Providence which has never failed me. In effect, all proved favourable; and, excepting two or three hard gales, I might, for the most part of the way, have come safely in a Gravesend boat.

Liverpool, October 18.

I HAVE been searching (in vain) for epithets and phrases, but I must stop.——They say the Greek is a more expressive language than our own; if so, I wish we both understood it, for it is impossible for mere English to do justice to a twentieth part of what I have in my mind. Yet I ought not to quarrel with words, lest my actions, however well meant, should fall equally short of what I owe you. But I know you will kindly value them according to my intention, which I am sure is strong and sincere, to make you every return in my power. I hope soon to name the day of my leaving Liverpool, and shall mind your caution about my health.

SECOND VOYAGE TO AFRICA.

1752.

At Sea, June 30.

I BEGIN to write the moment we are under sail, and shall snatch every interval while my friends stay with me.

The first thing I shall say is, that I am really easy. Though I have no relish for mirth, my mind is at peace. The knowledge of your love, the recollection of the happy time I have passed with you, and the powerful considerations of a more serious kind, which I have often repeated to you, have all the effect upon me that you could wish. And I assure you the resolution you have shown has no small influence, both as an example, and in giving me hope that you will strive to be composed, and to depend, with me, upon the good Providence which has already done so much for us. I do not complain of being something moved at parting; because I should be a wretch indeed, were I insensible of the value of what I leave behind. I can, from experience, pronounce, that the pains of an affection properly directed, are in no degree proportionable to its pleasures. I already look forward to a time when —— but I have no words to express myself, so must refer you to our last meeting on the second of November. Such another interview will be a full amends for the disagreeables of a long voyage. May the good and gracious God bless and preserve you. Remember my

last advice. Be patient and thankful, and expect me, at the best time, to return and be happy with you again.

At Sea, July 11.

Though my letter by the pilot-boat went twelve days ago, I have not written to you since. We were exercised for some time, while near the land, with very thick weather, and westerly winds; and I would not begin my sea-correspondence till I could tell you (as I thank God I now can) that we are safely in good sea-room. I am almost ashamed to say how easily I bear your absence. Surely it is not that I love you less than formerly; yet I seem to myself, to make a better shift without you than I ought. Though I think of you continually, and pray for you almost hourly, much oftener than ever, my love and care for you are much freed from inquietude and anxiety. I have my serious hours; for it is only from serious thoughts, at some times, that I can derive considerations sufficient to make me cheerful at any time.

I am now settled in a regular course; for so far as circumstances will permit, I do every thing by rule, and at a fixed hour. My time is divided into seasons for devotion, study, exercise, and rest; and, thus diversified, no part of it is tedious.

I have been following you, in my mind, to London this week, where I hope you arrived in safety last night; but, lest I should be mistaken in the time, I purpose to travel it over again next week. I have almost dismissed my fears upon your account, for I have so often recommended and resigned you to the protection of

God, that I seldom doubt of his special care over you. But I have bound myself in a strict promise, and engaged to use my whole interest with you to join me in it, that when he shall be pleased to bring us together again in peace, we will both endeavour to show gratitude by our conduct, as well as to express it in words. In the mean while, it is one of my daily and nightly petitions, that he may teach us to extract a real good out of these our painful separations, by improving the occasion to the increasing, and fixing, our best affections on himself. From his favour and goodness all our blessings, even our mutual love, proceeds. He is able and willing to prosper all our wishes and desires, so far as they are rightly grounded; and from his notice, neither time nor distance can separate us. He is an ever-present and an all-sufficient helper.

At Sea, July 24.

I know you have thought of me to-day, because it is my birth-day. I have likewise observed it; but not so properly celebrated, as solemnized it. I would willingly grow wiser and better, as I grow older, every year. I have now lived twenty-seven years, but how few things have I done really worthy of life! unless I am allowed to consider the instances in which I have endeavoured to show my affection and gratitude to you of that number. I have some hope that my remaining time will be better improved; and my prayer and wish for you is, that we may be both of one mind, and prove helps to each other in our most important business; and this will be the most effectual means of securing peace and satisfaction in our inferior concernments. I

continue to conceive most of my prayers in the plural number, as when we were together; for every desirable good that I can ask for myself, I am equally solicitous that you should be a sharer in.

At Sea, July 27.

I HAD nearly missed my post to-night, by attending to our old sea form in crossing the tropic. This is the boundary of what the ancients called the torrid zone. We crossed the supposed line of this boundary to-day. On these occasions, all the people on board a ship who have not passed it before, are subject to a fine, which, if they refuse to pay, or cannot procure, they must be ducked; that is, hoisted up by a rope to the yard-arm, and from thence dropped souse into the water. This is such fine sport to the seamen, that they would rather lose some of the forfeiture (which is usually paid in brandy) than that every body should escape the ducking. And in many vessels, they single out some poor helpless boy or landsman, to be half drowned for the diversion of his shipmates. But as I do not choose to permit any arbitrary or oppressive laws to be valid in my peaceful kingdom, I always pay for those who cannot pay for themselves. If this poor relation does not entertain you, the thought that I wrote it, and the persuasion that my inclination to send you something better is not wanting, will, I doubt not, make you some amends.

Indeed, I am at a loss for a subject. Suppose, for want of something better, I should observe, that it is a month since we parted. No, that will not do—the word *parted* has spoiled all. Oh! that morning! It

was a parting indeed! But do not think I am uneasy at the recollection. I only gave way to one tender sigh, and now it is gone. Well, suppose we turn the glass, and look forward to our next hoped-for happy meeting? Aye, that is the very thing; at the mention of it, I almost forget that we parted at all. Such a meeting as our last! Well, I am content, and acknowledge that one of those hours will make amends for all. Till that time shall come, all that we have to do is cheerfully to fill up the part Providence has appointed us, without too anxious solicitude; to pray for each other's welfare, and to endeavour to live under the impression of the blessings we have already received, or have yet to hope for, from our all-gracious Benefactor; and all the rest will in due time come round, and you will find my dependence upon his goodness to be well founded.

At Sea, August 7.

I HAVE no confidant now, as I had in my poor doctor last voyage, to whom I can ease my mind a little, by talking of you. For my chief mate, though in all other respects much to my satisfaction, has not that turn of temper which is requisite to relish the delicacy of the love I bear you; and to those who have not something of a fellow-feeling, my tenderness would appear only a kind of innocent folly. In this, you have greatly the advantage of me; you have friends about you, who will often speak of me, because they know it will please you. I would rather have your name so sounded in *my* ears, than to have Corelli himself entertain me with his own music. For want of this, I am

forced to have recourse to my old custom of repeating it softly to myself, praying, at the same time, that the happiness I have in you may be repaid you a thousand fold.

So that when I indulge myself with a particular thought of you, it usually carries me on further, and brings me upon my knees to bless the Lord for giving me such a treasure, and to pray for your peace and welfare. I cannot express the pleasure and satisfaction I find in these exercises. When thus engaged, my fears subside, my impatience of your absence changes into a resignation full of hope, and every anxious, uneasy thought is lulled to rest. This is my present temper, nor would I waste a wish for any thing the world can afford, beyond the probabilities which lie before me.

At Sea, August 11.

I NEED not apologize to you for writing so much in a serious strain; but were an excuse needful, I must plead *yourself.* For when I take up my pen, and begin to consider what I shall say, I am led to think of the goodness of God, who has made you mine, and given me a heart to value you. Thus my love to you, and my gratitude to him, cannot be separated. And as you are so good as to prize my affection, by finding it thus accompanied, you may be assured of its being unalterable. All other love, that is not thus connected with a dependence upon God, must be precarious. To this want I attribute many unhappy marriages. I believe many persons fall from their hopes of satisfaction in that state, by degrees insensible to themselves; and a secret change, or alienation of mind from each other,

takes place before they are well aware of it; till, in time, they proceed to such lengths as they would once have judged impossible.

I am not at a loss to account for this. God has subjected the present state of the world to uncertainty and vanity; not because he is a hard master, but because he sees, if we go on smoothly long, we are prone to forget that our great concern in this life should be to prepare for another. Now they who, by his grace, are led to consider the great truths of religion, and are taught, before the days of trial come, to submit themselves, their designs, and enjoyments, to his wisdom and guidance, may, in a great measure, escape the bitterness of evil, or, at least, the most bitter of those evils to which mortality is subject: because the merciful design of afflictions is, to them, so far answered. But they who judge so ill as to place a dependance upon each other, which interferes with what they owe to their common Preserver, oblige him, if I may so speak, to quash their purpose, either by sickness, sufferings, death, or what to me seems worse than all, a change of affection, to make them feel their offence in their punishment. I dare not say that you and I have not been guilty of this error. But since it has pleased God, as yet, to forbear afflicting us for it, I hope, for the future, we shall be more upon our guard, and not further displease him.

Sierra Leone, August 17.

We arrived here the 17th, after a fine, and not very long, passage. We had no violent weather, nor painful event, but a visible hand of conducting Providence at-

tended us all the way. I have begun trade, and things appear in a promising train.

I often ask myself if I know any person upon earth with whom I could be content, in all points, to change: and I can confidently answer, No: for the knowledge and enjoyment of your love enable me to look with pity upon kings, and I would not part with what I now feel upon your account, for the treasures of both the Indies.

October 6.

The Hunter, which will sail in a few days, has a large packet for you; and I have further sent you a few lines by Mr. D****, a young gentleman from Scotland, who is on board her. He has promised to deliver my letter in person, though he has no business at C**** but to oblige me by seeing you, that he may answer any little questions you may ask, or inform you of some incidents which I may have omitted. It is not easy to say, what pleasure I could take in conversing with any person who had lately been with you; and I judge of you by myself. In other respects he is an agreeable man, and I have been much pleased with him. I am informed he has a tolerable estate in Scotland; but having an eager desire of seeing new things, after having made the tour of France, he thought there might be something worthy of his notice even in Guinea. But I believe his expectations have been much baulked.

It is now the noon of night, as Shakspeare somewhere expresses it. I left Sierra Leone this morning. I am very sleepy, but must not go to bed yet, being often obliged to watch when the ship is under sail. This I submit to cheerfully, because you have, before-

hand, overpaid me for my trouble. I have been praying for your calm repose, and am pleased with the hope that only one of us is kept waking. I pity those who have only dull interest to animate them in their business; and am surprised to see how powerful an inducement this is to them who have not a better. But I believe love would support me through more, and with more alacrity, than their plodding motive. When I am wearied or perplexed with any affair, I have only to reflect that I am employed upon your account, and that I may look for my reward from you, when I have done my work, or rather, that you rewarded me before I undertook it, and all difficulties presently disappear.

Shebar, October 31.

Since my last I have been a week on shore, and three or four days indisposed; but am now, I thank God, quite recovered. Your letter of the 12th of July came very seasonably, to comfort me in my illness. When you assure me that you are easy, I seem to have nothing to make me otherwise.

I have been sitting very gravely with my pen in my hand for some minutes, waiting for a thought to begin with; but with so little success, that, were it not to you, I should lay the paper aside till I was in a better cue. But to you something must be said. I have rung so many changes upon love and gratitude, upon the pains of separation, and the overbalancing pleasures of meeting, that though I cannot be weary of the subjects, I begin to be weary of my way of treating them. But then, where shall I find other subjects worthy either of your attention or my own?

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BRUCE BRANCH.

Were I to muster up my learning, and tell you what Plato or Cicero said, and upon what occasion they said it, I should think the paper might have been filled more acceptably to you by a speech of my own. Were I to send you a sample of philosophy, you might justly say, "This is but a cold business." Shall I then try to be witty? Alas! one tender thought, one sigh that terminates in your dear name, would spoil my conceit. I can think but of one subject more, and that perhaps I have already overdone likewise, unless I could do it better. But perform well or ill, you have little to expect from me but either love-letters or sermons. In all other topics I feel a vanity and unimportance, which disgusts me when I am writing to you. But I cannot be soon weary of reminding you and myself of our obligations to the Author of all good, for our distinguished lot. May a grateful sense of his mercies be mutual! May it engage us in such a course, that death itself may not separate us long; but that we may have a well-grounded hope of meeting in a state, when the recollection of our highest endearments while here, which are surely the highest pleasure this world can afford, shall, by our own confession, be but a small thing compared with the abounding joys to which we shall then be admitted; and when we may have reason, through eternal ages, to bless the divine providential hand that first brought us together.

November 10.

I HAVE been walking the deck very pleasantly. It is my watch, for the ship is under sail. These silent night hours, when the weather is fair, are, to me, the

most agreeable part of the voyage: for in the day-time, the heat of the sun, the smoke of the furnace, and the hurry of trade, are a little troublesome; I mean they would be so, did not the thoughts of you interpose to enliven the scene. But when the sun is set, the fires out, and all but the watch are asleep, I can enjoy myself without disturbance. I have a set of favourite themes to muse upon, which are always at hand, and cannot be easily exhausted. Sometimes I ruminate upon what is past; at others, anticipate what I hope is to come. And sometimes I look round me and reflect how God has been pleased to distinguish me, in his providence, not only from the crowds, whose miseries and sufferings are obvious, but even from the most of those who suppose themselves, and would persuade others, that they are happy. But so scanty are the general notions of earthly happiness, compared with mine, that I doubt not there are thousands in possession of great outward advantages, who yet, in their brightest intervals, never felt half of the satisfaction which at this moment warms my heart; though now it is a time of trial and exercise with me, being removed a third of the globe from the only treasure I have, or wish for, upon the surface of it.

It is now a twelvemonth since we met, after the long absence of my last voyage. The recollection of that hour gives me a pleasure which neither time nor distance can impair. And when I reflect, that I may hope, by the blessing of God, to be favoured with such another, I can smile at all the little incidental difficulties that may stand between us. Not that I have reason to think so highly of that one particular day; it has only the merit of being an introduction to the many which followed. For when I am with you, I know

little difference of days, except between the first and the last. These are very different indeed!

Cape Mount, November 20.

It has been out of my power to write of late. A part of the time I was on shore; and the rest, indispensably engaged. But my prayers, and warmest affection for you, have found a place in every waking hour. I have made no great progress in trade as yet, but as I am in good health, and mercifully preserved from heavy troubles, I am content and thankful; and doubt not of doing well at last, by the blessing of Him who has been with me hitherto. Were I master of the whole coast of Africa, I would part with it to procure you the same ground and degree of peace which I possess myself; and I am willing to hope that you are, by this time, not far, if at all, behind me; for if you seek it in the path I recommend to you, I am as sure you will find it as I am that it is to be found no where else. Were I to confine my thoughts to the dark side of human life, and reckon up, not only the evils attendant on my present situation, but the numberless calamities to which the smoothest state on this side the grave is exposed, I should be always in fear, both for you and for myself. But when I consider that the Most High is on our side, that he is all-sufficient—that we have already had innumerable proofs of his goodness to us—and that his promise runs, To him that hath, shall be given—then every disagreeable prospect vanishes.

Mana, December 1.

THIS day has been devoted to serious thoughts. I have had Mr. T**** on board with me a month; which, in one respect, was no small inconvenience, by breaking in upon my usual times of retirement. As I expected this would be a day of leisure, I resolved last night, to dedicate it to Him to whom I owe my all. I find, by repeated experience, that it is impossible to serve him for nought. I who was yesterday fluctuating and unsettled, am now composed and happy. It is a pleasure to me that, in consistence with my plan, I can let you have your hour too; and write a letter, which you will accept, in a religious strain.

I spent the forenoon chiefly in a review of the various mercies I have received, the long list of my deliverances, enjoyments, and comforts.—The afternoon was employed in making known my requests, and submitting my views, designs, and hopes, to the disposal of my heavenly Father, whose wisdom and goodness are, I trust, engaged for me. In these exercises—oh! how I remember you! My first acknowledgments are for your love, and that you are mine, when I attempt to enumerate the blessings pertaining to this life; and my first desire is for a heart to value them. My prayers for you are, for your health, peace, and satisfaction, while we are separated, and for our happy meeting; but, above all, for your progress in religion, and that you may have a prospect of happiness, independent of all earthly comforts, and superior to them. So disinterested is my love, that I often earnestly pray you may, by grace, be prevented from making too much

account of any thing on this side the grave, not excepting myself. For though I value your affection beyond crowns and empires, I tremble at the thought of being over regarded, or that you should wholly rest your peace upon such a wretched, feeble prop as I am. A love with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, (such, I fear, ours has too much been to each other,) can be only due to our Maker and great Benefactor. I mention this, because I have found it hard to distinguish in this matter. A long time it was before I durst appeal to my conscience, that I did not behold you with a regard which belongs only to God. And even to this day, I fear my heart deceives me. But I am endeavouring to avoid this error, no less for your sake than for my own; lest I should provoke him to wound me in the most sensible part, and to afflict you, for my punishment.

I hope you will not misunderstand me, as if I thought I loved you, or could love you, too much, (that one necessary exception only excepted.) You may be assured that my love (especially when thus limited) is incapable of change, and always upon the increase. Whatever may be expected on my side, from a temper naturally susceptive of tenderness, and from the many inexpressible endearments and obligations I have received from you, none of which are lost or forgotten by me, I feel at this moment, and trust I shall always feel, while I can subscribe myself

Yours, &c.

Cape Mount, December 25.

I now sit down to wish you a happy Christmas; a merry one is a frequent phrase, but that falls far short

of my desire. For I have often found mirth and happiness to be two very different things; and that either of them, when prevalent in a great degree, is inconsistent with the other. My heart is warm with the recollection of many endeared hours passed with you, when my happiness has been, for the time, complete, and yet I have not then felt the least inclination to be merry; and I have often been forced into a laugh, when I have not been pleased.

This has been a serious day with me; and, after what I have written already, I need not attempt to say how much you have been concerned in it. It grieves me to think that this is usually a season of festivity and dissipation. Surely they who think proper to notice it at all, should show their attention in a different manner. If we are really Christians, and do indeed believe the tenour of the Scriptures, with what serious thankfulness, and joyful composure, ought we to commemorate the coming of a Saviour into the world? If the little good offices we perform to each other demand a grateful return, what do we owe to Him, who, of his own free motion and goodness, humbled himself so far, and suffered so much, to redeem us from extreme and endless misery? Oh! my dearest M***, it is a most certain truth, that if he had not pitied us, we must have been for ever wretched. And if we continue to neglect him now, our misery will be aggravated by the refusal of the sure and only mean of relief. And, however a round and series of what the world miscalls pleasure, may stifle uneasy thoughts for a time, they will at length awake, to the confusion of all who despise this mercy, and die impenitent. My subject has almost made me forget I am writing to you. For, blessed be God! I hope we are not like them. I trust

we both desire to be wise in time, and to apply to the Giver of all grace, for that sufficiency which of ourselves we cannot attain. And if we ask, we undoubtedly shall succeed. This hope fills my mouth with praise, since I now see a plain and secure path to eternal happiness, not for myself only, but for you likewise, whose welfare, if I mistake not, is little less dear to me than that of my own soul. I find, as Solomon says, that love is stronger than death: for my regard for you often leads my views beyond the grave, and alleviates the thought, that we must sooner or later be separated here, with the prospect of being joined hereafter, upon much preferable terms; where our love will be refined and ennobled, and the consciousness of our being mutually and for ever happy, will fill us with a joy of which we have no present conception; and yet, perhaps, this joy will be among the least in that happy state.

1753.

Mana, January 12.

Were it not for the late alteration of the style, this would be new-year's day. It is with a pleasing kind of regret I remember how happily I began the last year, and how happy I continued for just six months afterwards. The latter half of the year has been of a different colour; for though I have, even now, much to be thankful for, I am absent from you. A seafaring life has its peculiar trials and difficulties, and the Guinea trade, perhaps, has more than any other. But if I must be detained from you for a season, I am as well here as elsewhere; for to live without you, constitutes the very essence of Guinea to me, so far as the word ex-

presses a disagreeable situation; and I hope and believe I should find myself as much at a loss, and sigh as often for something better, if I lived in the palace of Versailles, and could call it my own, unless you were with me. But when I direct my thoughts forward, to the prospect of being restored to you again, the scene changes at once, and I seem to be at Versailles already.

It may be said that my hopes are precarious, and may be disappointed. But here religion comes to my aid, and tells me that my best interest, though apparently contingent, is in effect firm as a rock; being supported by Him whose wisdom, power, and goodness are infinite; who cannot but be present with me in all difficulties and dangers; who knows our weaknesses and our wants, and has promised to relieve and supply them. My own experience has convinced me, a thousand times, that his promise is sure. Here is my refuge and comfort. Every other expedient would fail me in some tender hours, when I think of home; but in the trust I have just mentioned I find repose when, seemingly, most destitute and forlorn. My prayers are frequent, that you, like me, may always derive comfort from the same considerations.

Mana, January 26.

Though to be absent from you is the chief part of my trial, it is not the whole. In this unhappy country, I am in the midst of scenes, not only inferior, but opposite to those which are inseparable from your company. But from being much among a people who are so far from possessing such mercies as I am favoured

with, that they are unable to form a conception of them, I may learn a lesson of gratitude; since the least pleasing part of my life is such, as still to leave me room to pity millions of my fellow-creatures. The three greatest blessings of which human nature is capable, are undoubtedly, religion, liberty, and love. In each of these, how highly has God distinguished me! But here are whole nations around me, whose languages are entirely different from each other, yet I believe they all agree in this, that they have no words among them expressive of these engaging ideas: from whence I infer, that the ideas themselves have no place in their minds. And as there is no medium between light and darkness, these poor creatures are not only strangers to the advantages which I enjoy, but are plunged in all the contrary evils. Instead of the present blessings, and bright future prospects of Christianity, they are deceived and harassed by necromancy, magic, and all the train of superstitions that fear, combined with ignorance, can produce in the human mind. The only liberty of which they have any notion, is an exemption from being sold; and even from this, very few are perfectly secure that it shall not, some time or other, be their lot; for it often happens, that the man who sells another on board a ship, is himself bought and sold, in the same manner, and perhaps in the same vessel, before the week is ended.* As for love, there may be some softer souls

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* The reader may perhaps wonder, as I now do myself, that, knowing the state of the vile traffic to be as I have here described, and abounding with enormities which I have not mentioned, I did not, at the time, start with horror at my own employment, as an agent in promoting it. Custom, example, and interest, had blinded my eyes. I did it ignorantly; for, I am sure, had I thought of the slave-trade then, as I have thought of it

among them than I have met with, but for the most part, when I have tried to explain this delightful word, I have seldom been in the least understood; and when I have spoken of its effects I have never been believed. To tell them of the inexpressible and peculiar attraction between kindred minds; the pains of absence, the pleasures of a re-meeting, (if I may make a word,) and all the other endearments (were it lawful, or possible, to name them) which I owe to you, would be labour lost; like describing the rainbow to a man born blind. What needs all this ado? they have said, Will not one woman cut wood and fetch water as well as another? Their passions are strong; but few, indeed, have any notion of what I mean by tenderness. While I am writing, many past circumstances occur to my memory, and my heart swells at the odious comparison I have unawares made.

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since, no considerations would have induced me to continue in it. Though my religious views were not very clear, my conscience was very tender, and I durst not have displeased God by acting against the light of my mind. Indeed, a slave ship, while upon the coast, is exposed to such innumerable and continual dangers, that I was often then, and still am, astonished that any one, much more so many, should leave the coast in safety. I was then favoured with an uncommon degree of dependence upon the providence of God, which supported me; but this confidence must have failed in a moment, and I would have been overwhelmed with distress and terror, if I had known, or even suspected, that I was acting wrong. I felt the disagreeableness of the business very strongly. The office of a gaoler, and the restraints under which I was forced to keep my prisoners, were not suitable to my feelings; but I considered it as the line of life which God, in his providence, had allotted me; and as a cross which I ought to bear with patience and thankfulness, till he should be pleased to deliver me from it. Till then I only thought myself bound to treat the slaves under my care with gentleness, and to consult their ease and convenience, as far as was consistent with the safety of the whole family of whites and blacks on board my ship.

I have heard England styled the paradise of women; but surely, in this respect, it is no less the paradise of men likewise: for there, perhaps, they best understand the means of their own happiness, and of how much importance it is to form a right judgment of the dignity and value of your sex; which, whoever attains, thereby indicates that he possesses some degree of dignity in himself. In saying this, to be sure, I sound my own praise, but you will excuse me.

Shebar, March 5.

It is often remarked, that advice is more easily given than followed. I have of late, and perhaps sometimes too officiously, taken occasion to prescribe patience, when I have seen people uneasy under a sense of what we call disappointments, and want of success. Providence seems at length to put me to the trial, how far the arguments I have used with others will have influence upon myself. I have been now near seven months upon the coast, and am yet unable to judge when I shall probably leave it, and must expect to make a losing voyage at last. I should not write so frankly, but that I hope to be in a better place, and upon a greater certainty, before I send my letter home. But I am willing to give you my present thoughts, that you may judge, once for all, how I am supported when things do not answer my wishes.

The interest of my employers, and my long confinement from you, are two points to which I cannot be indifferent. I hope I never shall, for then I must be ungrateful or insensible, either of which appears more terrible to me than any outward evils. But then my

concern ought to be no more than is necessary to excite me to make the most of what lies before me. As I cannot charge myself with neglect, or any considerable false step, though I am sorry to be the occasion of loss to my friends, the thought should not break my peace, if I am conscious of having done my best.

As to what concerns myself; how far two unsuccessful voyages may affect my interest, or diminish my expected profits, I am tolerably easy. I have placed my dependence higher: I consider my friends and employers as instruments in the hand of God for my good. He can continue them to me, or raise me up better with equal ease. As to money, you know my thoughts of it. In itself, and as an end, it is of no value; but of use, as a mean of procuring the conveniencies of life: and therefore I am willing to embrace any honourable terms for procuring a competency: but still, without solicitude, I have enough for the present; and the promise of God warrants me to hope for what he sees needful for me in time to come.

In this manner I reason against my first grievance, which is neither so pressing, nor so constantly upon my mind as the other—my long separation from you. Money matters affect me but occasionally, and I can relieve myself by employments or amusements; but your idea is before me at all times and in all places. You are with me in retirement, and go with me into company: neither business nor relaxation, neither hurry nor indolence, can hide you from my thoughts. Every thing I see, equally reminds me that you are absent; and now the season is drawing near when we hoped to meet; and yet to be still deferred. However, against this uneasiness I have some remedies, which never wholly fail me. I have often repeated them to you:

I think of your love, and that I am here for your sake. I recollect the past, I anticipate the future, and am satisfied. I consider likewise the benefits I am favoured with even now; my health, my preservation, and protection, while surrounded with impending dangers, whether on ship-board or on shore; and when I join to these the thought of my own unworthiness, and small improvement of my mercies, and my blindness and inability to choose (was it even permitted me) what is really best, upon the whole, for myself or for you, I have not a word to say. Instead of complaining, I ought to abound in praise. My chief trouble is from a fear lest you should not have the same resignation to the will of God. Excuse this doubt, my dearest; I know your temper is tender and apprehensive; and I know (and I am not ungrateful) that you feel much for me. Though I value your love more than a thousand kingdoms, I could almost wish to possess it in a degree more consistent with your quiet. It is well the paper is full, that I can add no more, or perhaps I might contradict myself upon the spot, for my last assertion. How could I bear that you should love me less than you do!

Sierra Leone, March 23.

Sometimes, in travelling, when I have met with two or three different roads, and have not been sure which was the right, I have deliberated a little, and then gravely taken the wrong: so it often happens in my writing to you. When I beat the bush of my brains for a subject, I start so many that I know not which to follow; and at last, perhaps, choose that which I am the least able to manage. I have been sitting in a wise suspense, whether I should try to divert, or advise, or thank you.

I am awkward at the first; the second, if needful, (for I would not pay you a false compliment,) is difficult for me to perform rightly; and the third I have almost worn threadbare, though I have never expressed the half of my meaning. Then for other things, one day here is so like another, that there hardly arises a new incident in a month; which, by the bye, demands my acknowledgment; for life is usually chequered with many events which, when well managed by an impatient temper, may furnish whole sheets, yea, quires, of complaints. And as nothing extraordinary occurs in my own history, neither do I hear of any thing interesting among the natives—politics or scandal have little place in this country:—under these circumstances I am hard put to it to write any thing; and this difficulty I have made so often, not only an excuse, but a subject, that I am tired of that likewise. But, as when a man is thoroughly hungry, he will eat what would once have seemed hard fare; so rather than forego the pleasure of writing to you, I make shift with any thing that will serve to fill up the paper.

Bence Island, March 30.

I AM now at the factory, in the river of Sierra Leone. We are at length preparing for sea, and I hope to find all in readiness when I return from Sherbro, where I purpose going to-morrow, in the long boat, to finish my business in that river, and hope to be back in about a fortnight. Therefore, as it will be some time before I can write to you, I would not omit to-night, though we are very busy. I hope this will be the last cruize I shall make this voyage. I have had so many, that I

should be almost weary, did I not consider that your interest leads me, and that your love will, I hope, in due time, pay me for my trouble.

Bence Island, April 10.

By the mercy of God, I am returned safe and well, from my voyage in the long-boat, without meeting any harm, though not without some fatigue; but that is always welcome for your sake. No one here can guess, by my looks or behaviour, how much of my heart is in another quarter of the world. In short, you would not yourself desire that I should bear your absence better than I do; yea, I fear, if you could see me, you would suspect me of indifference. But I should beg you to take my word, rather than judge by appearances. I hope to be, in a few days, on my way to the West Indies, whither my thoughts have often gone before me, in expectation of finding letters from you, which, next to your company, is the greatest pleasure I can think of. Let those be pleased with letters-patent who can be satisfied with honours and riches: if I do not absolutely despise these things, I can pronounce them trifles when compared with the satisfactions of mutual love, which so far resemble the joys of a good conscience, that nothing adventitious can either give them or take them away. They who possess an affluence of all other temporal good, if devoid of this generous tenderness, are in my view, objects of pity. I speak, as St. Paul says, after the manner of men; for notwithstanding all my encomiums upon love, I hold it to be very dangerous, and indeed destructive, unless regulated and governed by a due sense of religion.

Bence Island, April 19.

I HAVE been very happy this evening, in a solitary ramble round this island. I studiously avoided all company, and chose a retired walk, where I could vent my thoughts aloud, without fear of being overheard. The night was perfectly fine and serene, and I was favoured with a frame of mind that I cannot always command. The ship was in sight at a small distance, which gave the first turn to my meditations. My thoughts went back to the time when I first saw her upon the stocks in the builder's yard; and from thence led me to review the different scenes in which I have been engaged since I left Liverpool; which furnished me with so many instances of a kind preserving Providence, that I was, in a remarkable manner, emboldened and encouraged to recommend the rest of the voyage to the same gracious protection. May I never forget this night! I could not be long in the exercise of prayer and praise, without interesting you largely in it; and I think I never prayed more earnestly for myself, than I have to-night for you. I am now quite easy and composed, which is the nearest approach to happiness that I desire in this world, when I am not with you.

Plantanes, April 25.

ACCEPT this letter as a proof that, in the midst of company and business, I am still thinking of you. I write, and talk, and trade at the same time. I am now

to inform you, that I am just finishing, and hope to sail this night, or to-morrow morning, for St. Christopher's. I completed eight months upon the coast yesterday; in which time I have witnessed a variety of scenes, and have often been upon the brink of apparent danger, but am preserved in health and safety hitherto. If I call my long stay a disappointment, I would remember, that former disappointments, by the over-ruling providence and goodness of God, have proved, in the event, to my advantage; and I trust it will be so still. Thus I often preach to you, and you will not wonder, that having your peace of mind more at heart than any thing that can be named, I should be frequently inculcating what I believe, yea, what I am very sure, will be most conducive to it. If you could form a judgment of the numberless escapes and deliverances I met with last voyage, I think you would never fear for me again. I have now a better ship and ship's company, and am better provided for than then. I leave this with a large packet enclosed, to go by a vessel which is expected to sail, in about three weeks, directly for England, and will probably arrive there before you can hear of me from the West Indies.

At Sea, May 4.

If I can contrive any thing to say, I hope now to be more regular in my correspondence; for I have left the greater part of the cares and troubles, which used to divide my thoughts and time, behind me in Africa. I am now about three hundred miles on my way to St. Kitt's, and hope to get the trade-wind soon, which will be fair for the rest of the passage.

I lately enclosed you four sheets, which bring the history of my voyage down to the 12th of February. I have sent you twelve in all, by different conveyances, besides their covers, which were not blank paper. For all this, I charge your account, as the merchants say; or rather I acknowledge myself still your debtor for the favourable reception I know they will find, and which they are no further entitled to, than as proofs of an inclination to please. If there is merit in that, I shall not affect so much modesty as to disclaim it: for it is the business and glory of my life, to endeavour to act up to those professions which first induced you to confide in me. My mind runs so much upon the wished-for pleasure of letters from you when I arrive at St. Kitt's, that I often dream I have them in my hand, and when awake am often dictating for you; and by reading those I have already received, I can make shrewd guesses how kind and good you will appear in those which are yet to come. But when I have done my best, I persuade myself that I shall find, as I have usually done in all relating to you, that my expectations will not only be answered, but exceeded.

At Sea, May 7.

I was sensibly disappointed in missing the letter you mention obliging me with by a ship from London. I should have found in that some particulars of your long journey. How gladly would I have prevented you the inconvenience of that long and lonely journey, if performing it for you myself on foot could have done it. As it was, I could only attend you with my thoughts and prayers. How much am I indebted to the divine

goodness for restoring you home in safety and peace! The mention of footing it, reminds me of my solitary walk to Liverpool in the year 1748. Solitary indeed it was then; but could I have known that the time was coming when you would accompany me on the same road, I should have thought it pleasant, in defiance of heat, dust, and fatigue. But my only business at London, which was with you, I left unfinished: I was short of money, destitute of friends, without prospect of a livelihood for myself, and still more of having it in my power to make proposals to you; and therefore had nothing to cheer me. When I recollect these dark seasons, I cannot but pause to wonder at the goodness of God, who was even then leading me, though I neither knew him, nor the way by which I went. How wonderfully was every obstacle to our union removed, and how happy has that event been (I hope I may say) to us both. I might have proved a wretch, insensible and ungrateful, when I had gained my point. Such I see is the folly and inconstancy of many. But my satisfaction has been still upon the increase; and, so far as happiness is attainable here, I think I have known it, and with as few drawbacks, for the time, as any person living.

At Sea, May 18.

We are now about half way to St. Christopher's from Guinea, in point of distance; and I hope nearer in respect of time, as we are in the trade-wind, which blows most of the year from the eastern quarter. Though I count the days and hours I am from you, my time does not hang heavy upon my hands: a part of it

is employed, twice or thrice a day, in praying for you; a part of it in reading and studying the Bible. The rest of my leisure is divided between reading, writing, and the mathematics, as my inclination leans. I pass my verdict upon the actions of Cæsar, Pompey, and twenty other hot-headed heroes of antiquity; and when I reflect upon their mighty designs, their fatigues and risks, and at last their disappointments, even when they attained the desired object; I ask myself sometimes, with a smile, "What trifles are these compared with love?" sometimes with a sigh, "What trifles are these compared with eternity?" The latter question brings my censure home to myself, and forces me to confess, that the greater part of my own schemes and prospects are no less vanities than those which I pity in others. I am pleased with the mathematics, because there is truth and certainty in them, which are seldom found in other branches of learning. Yet even in these, I am discouraged; for the more I advance, the more clearly I perceive, that the greatest human knowledge amounts but to a more pompous proof of our ignorance, by showing us how little we know of any thing, and how many inquiries may be started, concerning which we can know nothing. Then again, what we *can* attain requires so much time and pains, that it scarcely quits cost; especially, as it seems needless to toil for knowledge in this world, under so many disadvantages, when possibly, before I have been an hour within the vail, I shall know more, intuitively, than my namesake, Sir Isaac, had ever a glimpse of. However, I still jog on in this road, partly to keep me from idleness, which is the source either of sin or disquiet; and partly because I consider every little improvement I

can make to be valuable, so far as it may enable me to appear to more advantage in the character of your husband.

At Sea, May 28.

I EXPECT that we are now within three or four days' sail of our port. Thus far we have crossed the ocean again without trouble or harm.

I hope you will derive encouragement and thankfulness by recollecting, from what you may have heard or seen, how many persons in my way of life have parted from their families and affections since I left you, and with no less pleasing prospects and probabilities, who, before this time, have been cut off from the hope of a return. One instance I shall mention, because I think you know the man, Mr. ****, who sailed chief mate of the Adlington. He had a constitution likely to wear many years, a good character and interest, and a wife and family. He had been master of a ship in some home trade, but chose to go as mate to Guinea, one voyage, to introduce himself into this line of business. His views would probably have been answered, if he had lived; but he was killed in an insurrection of the slaves before he had been two months upon the coast.

If this story, and many more of the same kind, which the common news-papers will furnish, should increase your fears for me, I shall be sorry; and must say the fault would be in yourself. I am still safe, though I was liable to the same danger. My slaves likewise were, for a time, disposed to be very troublesome; but I was always providentially favoured with a timely intimation of their designs, so that they never proceeded

to open disturbance; and for several months past, they have been as quiet and tractable as children. Having had so many repeated proofs of a gracious, and always present Protector, I think it would be not only folly, but ingratitude and sin to disturb him now. So that even with regard to yourself, though you are unspeakably the dearest blessing and comfort of my life; for whose sake chiefly it is, that all other advantages appear desirable; and though I have no information of your welfare, later than of nine months' date, yet I cannot say that I am uneasy. While I hear nothing to the contrary, I shall trust, pray, and believe that the Lord still preserves you in mercy to us both, and will, in good time, bring us happily together again.

St. Christopher's, June 3.

We arrived here in safety last night. I can say little more, as I expect to be called on for my letter every minute; and I would not miss the opportunity if I could only send a single line. I feel enough in my own disappointment, to oblige me to be punctual. I promised myself many letters from you, upon my arrival here: judge, then, (if you can,) how much I am chagrined, not to find even one. I am sure it is not owing to any neglect of yours; and though I have not heard from you so long, I am not quite uneasy. I have committed you into the hands of God, whose goodness abounds to me daily. On him I depend, and endeavour to think, no news is good news.

Sandy Point, St. Kitt's, June 8.

I INFORMED you, on the 3d, of my arrival, but was then too busy to enlarge. I have now leisure enough, but must confess I write with a heavy heart. I cannot account for having no letters from you after so many months, if you are well. But I endeavour to compose myself by a submissive dependence upon the providence of God, to whom I have so often, and so earnestly commended you. For my peace's sake, I try to suppose that the letters I so longed for, have by some means miscarried. I will endeavour not to mention this subject any more, but I cannot promise to forget it: in every other point, I have all possible satisfaction. Most of the cargo is sold, and at a good price. I hope the loss upon the voyage will prove inconsiderable, and I believe my own interest in it will be better than in the former. I was going to add, as usual, that I expect my best reward from you; but this thought gave rise to another which drew from me a heart-felt sigh. But I remember my promise: I have sent a boat up to Antigua upon the peradventure that your letters may have been lodged for me there. I know a separation must at some time take place, but I hope and pray it may be deferred till we have more strength to bear it. A perfect acquiescence in the will of God, could we attain it, would be worth more than mountains of gold and silver. I know, as I have often said, that our concerns are under the best and kindest management. I know who brought us together, and has blest us with a mutual affection; for want of which, marriage is a clog and burden to thousands. And he

knows our passions and our weakness; and, unless we over-rate the comforts he bestows, will never deprive us of them, but with a design of giving us something still better in their room.

Sandy Point, June 12.

I HAVE sent away all my spare sheets, and shall take care to be constantly provided with something for every opportunity. But to what purpose do I write, when perhaps my dear M**** may be past the power of reading? Indeed, I find it a heavy task now, to what it used to be! but since I am not quite without hope of your welfare, (which is the very best I can say,) I must write on, lest I should subject you to an anxiety like that which I now feel. I am forced to assume an air of cheerfulness in company, but, maugre all my precautions, I often discover myself to be a hypocrite, by my involuntary sighs; and at night I dream I know not what.

Yet when you read this, do not think I was unhappy when I wrote it. My hopes, for the most part, prevail; and I consider, even now, that if we meet happily at last, I shall soon be overpaid for all my care. Under such a disappointment as this, it is necessary either that I should not be quite easy, or that I should love you less than I do. You will allow the former evil to be a mere trifle, compared with the other.

I have informed my owners that I cannot undertake to do any thing upon the Windward Coast next season, the trade is so overdone. If they will send me, I am ready to go; but I will not be blamed, in case of ill-success, for not honestly giving my opinion. If they

take my advice, perhaps they may send me to some other part of the coast, or to some other part of the world. I am indifferent as to the how, or where, provided I may be permitted sometimes to tell you, it is all for your sake; and to hear you say, that you accept it so.

Sandy Point, June 21.

I HAVE sent you several letters and packets since my arrival. I cannot now complain, as formerly, for want of a subject. I have one with which I could fill many sheets, but have promised not to touch upon it, if I can help it. So that I am at present under a double difficulty: it is equally hard for me to write what would entertain you, or to refrain from what I know would grieve you. Well, I must submit. My happiness with you is such, that all incidental pains and uneasinesses seem mere trifles, when either past or to come, however hard to bear when present. My pleasures, on the contrary, whether at the time, in recollection, or in prospect, always afford me consolation. Thus, though there is, strictly speaking, more evil than good in life, yet Providence so orders it, or at least so orders my share, that I find a little of the real good overbalances a great deal of the evil. My fears and uncertainties upon your account are much preferable to my being a mercenary wretch, incapable of valuing you as I ought. When I consider how many I see who are blind to the merit of their wives, because they are secure of them, I learn how much I owe to the Lord for blessing me with the knowledge of my true

interest, and a mind susceptive of tenderness and sensibility.

I believe I was rather sparing of my promises in the time of courtship; at least I engaged for no more than is usual on such occasions; but it has been my happiness since, to endeavour to act fully up to what I had said. And I now see, by the conduct of many who treat such things as matters of course, how nearly my duty and my pleasure were united, and how miserable I must have been, if capable of wronging the confidence you placed in me. I see that those who cannot find their satisfactions *at home*, seek them in vain *abroad*. And thus I understand the literal meaning of the word *diversions;* which are only, or chiefly, agreeable to those who wish to turn their thoughts from their own situation. What numbers are there who frequent the theatres, assemblies, balls, and all the various scenes of dissipation, without being really pleased for one half hour, either with themselves, or with any body or thing around them? They languish continually for a change, and rather than continue in the same pursuit, are willing to change for the worse.

A letter from Liverpool, dated April 5, informs me of the death of our friend Mrs. M***. What a striking lesson! A beautiful woman, in the bloom of youth, with gay hopes and prospects, cut off in the first year of marriage! As you mentioned her being with child, I think it probable that she died in child-bed. Alas! the vanity of this world and all its enjoyments! How little do we know what to wish for! I hope I shall always be contented and pleased, if it should please God that you never have to encounter that terrible risk. How could I bear to consider myself as the immediate, though innocent, cause of your death! I own

that children, from the consideration of their being yours, would be highly acceptable to me, if it were so appointed; but I hope I shall never be so mad as to wish for them, for fear the consequence should ruin me. I know I am already happy without them.

Sandy Point, June 23.

My letters were sealed, and just going away, but I gladly break open yours, to tell you, that the boat which I sent to Antigua has brought me (Oh how kind and careful is my dear!) six letters from you, besides several others from friends, which, though very acceptable, are of less importance to my peace. I am sorry now, that I disclosed my fears to you, as you will perhaps be uneasy for me, till you learn by this that my wound is healed. I assure you, I dissembled what I could, and expressed much less concern than I felt, because I was writing to you. I have to praise God for the mercy of this day, and to confess the sin and folly of my distrust of his goodness. I have only had time, as yet, to read your letters twice. I see already, that I cannot fully answer them, but I am sure my full heart means you thanks.

Sandy Point, July 5.

I think this is the twelfth letter I have sent you from hence in the space of a month, and they have been all pretty full; and I believe I shall hardly send you above one, or, at most, two more, before I sail myself, which I hope will be within ten days. In some of my former, I have commented upon three of yours, which I have received here.

The next, in order of time, is dated the third of January. I began the new year very seriously, and wish I could say, the whole, hitherto, had been of a piece; but there has not a day passed without my prayers, that every blessing may rest upon you. I thank you for resolving not to like any one but whom I first approve. I wish not to trouble you with many exceptions; but perhaps sometimes your judgment and mine may differ a little; for you have too much good-nature and openness to suspect some of the poor fluttering things that intrude upon you. I aim at one in particular, but you are sensible that some, of whom you once thought better than they deserved, have before now explained their own characters, and justified my censure; and, sooner or later, all such will appear in their proper colours; for, where there are no good principles, professions and pretences must fall to the ground. You have given a good turn to Mrs. P****'s backwardness to believe we were married; but if we live to see her together, she shall speak, if she pleases, for herself, and tell us whether your compliance did not surprise her more than my perseverance. But I care not which it was, since I know that I am happy. Happy indeed, since you acknowledge that you think yourself so; for I never was so poor a wretch as to think of being happy alone. The only risk I ran was this—lest I should presume too much upon myself in expecting to inspire you with a reciprocal regard. The event has, indeed, answered to my wishes, but, when I think seriously of myself, I cannot but wonder at it, and at my own hardiness in the undertaking.

You say, my love continued, and yours increased. But has not mine increased likewise? I have no simile to illustrate the difference, between the regard I bear you now, and that which I had for you before marriage.

I was not a hypocrite then. My affection was, perhaps, as strong as, in those circumstances, it could be. But I loved you, as I may say, for your looks; my love had little more to feed upon. As yet there were none of those endearments and obligations, which now continually throng my remembrance. In short, I find by experience, that love, to be stable and permanent, must be mutual; and then, after years and years of possession, it will be still increasing; and every new endeavour to please, will produce a new pleasure. How different is this from the vice which the libertine would disguise under the name of love!

Sandy Point, July 11.

If I have a good passage, I may be in England before this notice reaches you, for I hope to sail this evening, and the vessel by which I send it is bound to London, and will stay here two or three days after me. But as she is a better sailer than mine, may probably arrive first. I allow you to begin to think of my arrival when you hear I am upon my way home, but beg you not to be impatient for news. Passages from the West Indies are very uncertain. It sometimes has happened that a vessel, which has sailed a month after another, has reached home as much before her. I have told you, that there is not a stronger or safer ship than mine upon the sea; and the same good Providence which preserved me last voyage, in a very old and crazy vessel, will be with me now; and I am going in the finest season of the year. In short, though I ought not confidently to presume on any thing in this uncertain world, I derive from the tenour of the dispensations I

have met with, for several years past, a cheerful persuasion, that the God in whom I trust will preserve me for further mercies, and still make me an instance of his goodness to the most unworthy.

At Sea, July 23.

I AM almost ashamed to say, that though I have been twelve days at sea, this is the first time of my writing to you. But I hope to be more frequent in future. I have, indeed, been very busy, and am so still. But I will not offer so poor an excuse ; for if I can find time to eat or sleep, I can as well find an hour for your service, which is the second best business of my life. I have had much peace since I received your letters ; but I may now venture to own, that my disappointment till I had them, was the greatest trial I have known since I could call you mine. You know the strength of my passion, and you know well (observe my confidence) the painfulness of absence and silence from what we most value. But it is now happily over ; and I hope what I then suffered will prove for the good of both hereafter.

The weather is fine, and the wind fair. I am drawing nearer to you every moment. Perhaps, as my prospect brightens, my genius may improve. My good intentions, at least, will not be wanting to entertain you. Thus much by way of preface. It grows late, and another agreeable employment awaits me ; I mean to recommend you to God in my prayers, that every evil may be kept from you while you sleep. I shall then lie down myself, with my usual wish, (which sometimes happens,) that I may dream myself in your company.

At Sea, July 24.

You think, by my last letters, that I am grown more grave than formerly. I do not intend to be more dull, nor am I troubled with low spirits; but I own that gravity, so far as is consistent with cheerfulness of heart, appears to me desirable. And I hope I shall return to you graver (in my sense of the word) than I have been, but that this change will not be to my disadvantage as a companion, and least of all to you. Cannot I remind you of many happy hours we have passed together, when noisy mirth, and the mistaken gayety in which thousands are bewildered, would have seemed tasteless and impertinent?

Perhaps when you read this, I may be at your elbow to ask you—if not, I beg you to ask yourself—When sometimes you have been sitting alone in a melancholy muse, perhaps the more lonely for not having heard of me—when your imagination has painted the dangers to which I was exposed, and your memory has officiously furnished you with instances of some who have suffered by such disasters;—or when you have recollected the circumstances of our past endearments—and, to finish all, when you have recalled me to your thoughts in the action of parting from you without a word or sigh, for fear of increasing your trouble—I say, when a mixture of these, and similar ideas, have wrought you up to that pitch of regret and concern which must be sometimes paid for the privilege of loving—tell me, if then, the world, with all its gayeties and amusements, has not appeared a bubble, a shadow, a wilderness? Why then should we not always be

too grave to be pleased with them, since we have repeated proofs, that none of the world's gewgaws can afford us relief in our mournful hours? So far from helping us at such times, we prefer our own thoughts (though painful enough) to every thing that offers to divert us, and carry it with caution to our dearest friends, lest they should steal our grief away; I have said *We* and *Us*, all along, having no doubt but a description of my own feelings will answer to yours likewise. Yet, after all, we seem to be persuaded, that a more happy couple than we are, cannot be found. If so, do we not allow and prove, that happiness is not to be expected in this life; at least, not in any nor all the things that are of an earthly growth? Who has it, if we have it not? And what have we? Perhaps a precarious month in a year, which, considered in itself, is to me valuable indeed. But it must be owned, that the more we are pleased the short space we are together, the more we are at a loss in the long interval of separation; during the greater part of which, we know no more of each other than of the silent grave.

The insensible, selfish creatures, whom caprice or custom yoke in a married state, without design or confidence are strangers to our satisfactions: this is true; but neither do they feel the drawback. To quit a person dearer than eyes or life—to be at a painful uncertainty for many weary months for a welfare more precious to us than our own—and from a sense of happiness at home, to be raised to a pitch incapable of tasting the common entertainments of life abroad—to be always fearing what may never happen, and regretting what can never be recalled—from these, and many more pains which I feel, but cannot describe, their in-

sensibility secures them. These are appropriate, prerogative troubles, which none but lovers, nay, none but happy lovers, are capable of suffering.

At Sea, July 25.

A STRANGER might suppose I was yesterday complaining of my lot, but you know me better. That I can love; that my regard was directed to you, and has met with a suitable return from you, are my chief temporal blessings, in which, notwithstanding all disadvantages, I still deem myself happy; that is, in a qualified sense: so far as this imperfect state will admit, and far beyond my deserts, or the common attainment of mankind. But for this I am much beholden to my gravity, such as it is. For should I grant, that a serious temper is not quite necessary to give us the full relish of our enjoyments when present, (which is more, however, than I mean to grant,) yet surely it is needful to support us in the want of them.

Though, in the moment of taking my leave of you, I felt more than I can express; yet, in the midst of my grief, and when quitting what I most valued, I thought myself happier than thousands can be in the possession of their wishes. I left you, and with the expectation of a long absence; but a sense of the divine providence, and my trust in God, greatly obviated my cares and fears, and led my thoughts forward to the hour (I hope now nearly approaching) which will restore me to you again. I was like a person committing his dearest treasure to his dearest friend; and then went down stairs with a mixture of peace and grief not easily described; not as violently torn away, but as willingly foregoing you for a while, that I might better deserve you.

I considered, that the Lord, who had joined us, could easily have so appointed our affairs, as to free us from the necessity of such long separations; and I thought it would have been so, but that He, who knows all things, knows the indulgence would hurt us in some particulars, perhaps in many, which we are not aware of. I felt for the uneasiness which your regard for me might sometimes occasion; but I saw, that even this might lead your mind more closely and frequently to him for help, and if so, be a benefit. I confess, the thought of death, on either side, made me serious. If I had apprehended, that was the last time I should hold you in my arms, how could I have left you at all? No; —then methinks, wind and tide, business and honour, would have pleaded in vain, and I must have been carried from you by force. But this, which was my only dread, hardly occurred to me at the time, and was soon removed, by an inward persuasion that we should happily meet again. And, oh! could you form an idea of the evils I have since been preserved through, and kept for the most part in peace, seldom knowing where the danger lay, till it was past, you would allow, that I am a living proof of the truth of those promises which I endeavour, by the grace of God, to make my stay and my trust.

I hope I have made out the advantage of a religious frame of mind, in my present situation. Let me now consider, whether it will not be equally necessary, and conducive to our happiness, upon a re-union. Will it not be an additional pleasure, to think that we do not meet again, as it were by chance, but by the care of a watchful Providence, in answer to prayer; as a token of his favour, and an earnest, to encourage our future dependence upon him? How could I, loving you as I

do, be easy a moment, without this dependence, in such a changeable state, and not knowing what the next day, or hour, may bring forth? Nor is religion a restraint upon any real or rational pleasure. For, as the apostle emphatically expresses it, God gives us *all* things *richly*, to *enjoy*; not grudgingly, but freely and richly; not to raise desires which may not be gratified; what he gives, is with the design that it may be enjoyed. It is true, there is a modus, a moderation, enjoined; but this, likewise, is for our benefit, that we may not spoil the relish of our comforts, nor indispose ourselves for the reception of his further and better gifts.

At Sea, July 26.

Since, then, a serious and dependent spirit secures to us the best enjoyment of our blessings, and obviates, in a great measure, the inconveniences to which they are subject; what remains, but that we should resolve and endeavour, to the best of our power, to cultivate this temper, and to live so as has appeared to us most reasonable, when we have been uneasy and afflicted? The contrary behaviour carries in it so much disingenuousness, that I am ashamed when I reflect upon my past guilt and folly. For it is certain, that I have often been least observant and attentive, when a grateful mind would have been most so. For these reasons I hope, upon my return, to appear more grave than ever, to one part of our acquaintance; but then I shall be always cheerful, in the approbation of my conscience. I have chiefly written all this, upon my own account, that the perusal of it hereafter may confirm and strengthen me in my present views and desires.

At Sea, July 31.

I AM persuaded, as I have often said, that if it was in all points best for us to be always together, we should never be parted. He who has already done so much for us, could easily add this to the rest of his mercies, and perhaps, at a proper time, he will. If not, let us entreat him to direct our thoughts and pursuits to a better state, where no separation, anxiety, or grief, shall disturb us for ever. The trials of this life are highly useful and necessary to prevent our minds from fixing here; especially to us, who have so much to prize in each other. But let not passion mislead us to suppose, that we are not capable of a happiness, as far beyond our present experience or conception, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Our mutual affection, which now makes life chiefly valuable to us, will, I trust, subsist in a nobler manner, when the transient causes upon which it was at first founded shall, perhaps, have no more place in our remembrance; at least, will not be considered in the light we now esteem them, but will appear truly valuable, only so far as they were, by the blessing of God, subservient to a further and better end. And how will it then increase our joys, (if our joys will then be capable of increase,) to think that we have assisted each other in obtaining them!

At Sea, August 5.

SUPPOSING that, if you are in health to-day, you have been a partaker of the communion at church, I at-

tended you with my prayers, about the time; that you might receive a blessing, and have cause to look back upon the opportunity with comfort. If it please God to continue our present favourable appearances, I hope to join with you the next time, with a pleasure which only they who have been long separated from public worship, and who have so many mercies to acknowledge as I have, can conceive. It comforts me to think, that you are favoured with all the advantages of which my way of life deprives me for a whole year, or longer. And I hope you suitably improve them.

My affection carries my wishes and desires for you, far beyond the narrow bounds of the time we can expect to pass together here; and I shall be glad to find, that a preparation for an hereafter has a place in your thoughts, much superior to any concern or regard for me. For I am a poor, weak creature, incapable, dearly as I love you, of shielding you from the smallest evil, or of doing you any service so great, as by dissuading you from placing too much dependence upon a worm like myself. Think not that I undervalue your affection: I am sure I would not exchange it for all the kingdoms upon earth. But there is a regard, which is due only to Him who first inspired us with love to each other. While our mutual affection is restrained, in a proper subordination to him, I hope we shall not be blameable for preferring it, as I do, to whatever else can be named. But if we exceed this boundary, we not only sin, but expose ourselves to a double risk of having our comforts blighted, either by death, or by heavy troubles. All that we possess or value is the immediate gift of God, who proposes the most ingenuous and grateful motives to win us to his service. But if, by fondly reposing on creatures, we pervert his good-

ness, and set up a rest independent of the Creator, what can be expected, but that he will either recall the blessings we so little deserve, or throw in bitter ingredients to spoil our pleasures?

I tremble to think how much I have exposed you, by my blindness and folly in this respect. When I was so long at St. Kitt's, without hearing from you, that I almost concluded you were dead, my conscience confirmed my fears; for I knew that I deserved to be punished where my feelings were most tender and sensible. This conviction lay upon my mind, with a weight that no words can express. Ah! thought I, but for me, she might have been still living and happy. My weakness and ingratitude have shortened her days! But God is merciful: after I had suffered thus for about a fortnight, I received your letters. But had the event proved according to my dread and my desert, what would have become of me?—To survive you upon any terms would be a great trial: but it then seemed comparatively light, could it have been abstracted from the aggravation of having sinned you away. But—I cannot give you a just idea of the state of my mind at that time. I thank God, it is happily over, and I have now a comfortable hope that we shall meet again in peace. If we do, surely I shall not be such a wretch again.

At Sea, August 16.

Now I may write leisurely, for the wind is contrary. Though I am earnestly desirous to see you, I would not be impatient, nor wish, if it was in my power, to fix the time myself. I trust it shall be in a happy hour, and I desire to leave the *when*, to God. Our times are in his

hands. It will signify little a hundred years hence, whether I was five, or six, or more weeks, on my passage homewards from St. Kitt's, in the year 1753. And, indeed, it will signify but little when I have been half an hour with you. I shall then soon forget the inconvenience of delay. If I feel any concern, it is on your account; for my love would not willingly have you kept in an hour's suspense for me. But my judgment speaks more reasonably, and tells me that, as disappointments and hindrances have often proved of real service to myself; so, perhaps, they may be to you likewise. And the dependent frame of spirit, in which I am now happy, would be worth your purchase, if you have not yet attained it, (but I hope you rather exceed me,) at the price of not seeing me this twelvemonth.

At Sea, August 18.

I AM brought in safety to the close of another week. The evening of a Saturday, I usually allot to the exercise of prayer and praise. It is not foreign to this design to employ half an hour in writing to you, to invite you to join with me in praising our gracious Preserver, as we are jointly interested in each other's concernments.

The wind has been Easterly a few days, but it now seems to be coming about fair again. For my own part, I consider the winds from every quarter to be fair; though, in compliance with our customary forms of speaking, I call those so which allow me to sail to my intended port in a straight line. When it changes, I am obliged to change my course, and to go something about. But they all contribute to answer my best wish, at the proper time. And probably a contrary wind is no less conducive to this end than a more direct one;

for we know not when we go too fast or too slow. A ship has often been hurried into danger and distress by a quick passage.

I shall be with you in my thought to-morrow, in the church, in your retirements, and at your meals. I rise early to pray for your happiness, before you awake; and sit up past your hour, that I may beg a blessing upon your rest, before I go to rest myself. Some persons would smile at all this. Let them smile—so that I may give the most sincere and serious proof of my affection, by praying at all hours, and in all circumstances, for your peace and welfare.

At Sea, August 29.

We have again a fair wind, and very pleasant weather, I have often heard your sex compared to the ocean. I hope the resemblance does not generally hold, (I am happy to be certain, that in one instance it does not,) for there cannot be a more apt emblem of inconstancy. This spot of water, which I am now passing over, which at present is as smooth as a meadow, spread round far as the eye can reach, like a great mirror, and reflects the beams of the moon unruffled, has, perhaps, been the grave of many; at least, their terror, and will often be so. It may be, that the next who follow me, will find a very different scene. For let the wind blow with violence from any quarter, for the space of four hours, and all will be in confusion; the mirror broken, the level destroyed, and nothing to be seen but alternately yawning gulfs and moving mountains, every one seeming to rise higher than the rest, and the smallest sufficient to destroy the stoutest ship, and to confound

human confidence in a moment; if not continually restrained by that sovereign power which rules the waves with a nod, and limits them to their bounds, beyond which, in their highest rage and confusion, they cannot rise the tenth part of an inch. How they feel, at such times, who have no reliance but on their own skill and precaution, I cannot say; but was it so with me, I should often prove a very coward; and, indeed, always; for when danger was not apparent, I should dread it as being imminent. When I compare the various contingencies to which a ship is liable, with the best preventions or remedies that art can furnish against them, they seem so disproportionate, that, were it not for a superintending Providence, I should think it a wonder indeed if any one vessel made a voyage in safety. But as in this view I should be always afraid, so now, since I am certain that I am under the care of God in all places, I do not, even in turbulent weather, suffer more anxiety than is needful to engage my attention to the proper use of means. This is my part; and if means are succeeded, it is by the blessing of God, without which my diligence would be unavailing. The watchman waketh but in vain, *except* the Lord keep the city; but it does not follow, that *because* the Lord keeps the city the watchman may go to sleep, but rather the contrary.

At Sea, August 29.

I TOLD you yesterday, that I might probably dine to-day at Liverpool; but I must wait longer. Last night brought us, with fair wind and with fair weather, within four hours' sail of our port. We stopped to wait for day-light and a pilot. The day came at its

appointed time, but, instead of a pilot, brought a strong gale of wind, with thick weather; so that I was glad to turn about and away to sea again; and may be thankful if I can keep clear of the sands and dangers which lie before the entrance of the river, which I trust I shall; for I believe the providence of God has not brought me safely across two oceans, to leave me to my own poor shifts at last. It really blew very hard, and looked very dismally at four this morning: but the weather is now more moderate, though still dark and rainy. I was something anxious in the night, but am at present tolerably easy. God is my defence; if he is on my side I must be preserved: the winds and waves obey him!

I can now give you a new proof that my dependence upon God is not in vain. When I wrote the above, I was in a very indifferent situation: a hard gale of wind, thick weather, and very little sea-room. Had things continued to another day, I might have suffered shipwreck within a few miles of my port; but I had scarcely laid the paper by, when the weather changed to quite fine, and the wind came about fair. Before noon I got a pilot on board, and I may now hope to be at Liverpool this very night. Surely no one experiences the goodness and care of Divine Providence more continually than I do! Surely the Lord hears and answers my poor prayers!

THIRD VOYAGE TO AFRICA.

1753.

At Sea, October 26.

I NOW begin to prepare materials for new packets. The first thing in course is to tell you that, by the blessing of the Lord, all is well with me. We had an extraordinary good outlet to sea, and lost sight of the last land the third day after parting with you. We are all in good health and spirits. My time passes, perhaps, too pleasantly, considering that possibly you may be mourning at the very instant when I am most cheerful: But I excuse myself to myself, by pleading that it was your desire I should be as cheerful as I can. At all times I have room in my thoughts for you; and the most pleasant of all my hours, are those which are devoted to praying for you. My mind attends you this week, from stage to stage, on your long journey home. The wise tasteless *many* would smile at this attention, and call me a trifler. So let them. If it gains a smile of acceptance from you, I will account it a matter of importance; and smile at them, in my turn; though I rather pity them.

At Sea, November 2.

WE saw and passed the island of Madeira this morning, (which is distant from Liverpool about 1500 miles,)

though this is but the thirteenth day since we left the rock. As we are now entering that part of the ocean where the wind blows from the eastern quarter the year round, I have a prospect of a quick passage. Should it prove so, it will be agreeable, especially as I have not been left to wish for any thing particular, being sensible that I know not how to choose the best means and times for accomplishing my own desires if the choice was given to me. Dispatch will be welcome, as affording me the prospect of a more speedy return to you. But should I meet with delay, I hope to acquiesce, and to believe that it will keep me back from something that would be worse. Was I to judge otherwise, I should sin against the experience of many years, in which I have always had my wishes gratified, so far as was consistent with my safety; and have met with no disappointment, or trouble, but what I have afterwards perceived was intended, or at least over-ruled, for my benefit.

In two points we are, and have been, favoured above thousands. First, in a tender and reciprocal regard, which renders it impossible for either of us to be pleased or pained alone; and, secondly, that this sympathy has been chiefly, I could almost say wholly, employed in a participation of pleasures, with very little interruption, (the pain of absence excepted,) on either side. I know not which of these blessings is most valuable; but certainly, when combined, (as with us,) they constitute the nearest approach to happiness, in a temporal view, that this imperfect state will admit. There are many who, in point of outward advantages, may seem equal, or superior to us; but then their contracted, selfish spirits cannot relish or improve them. Again, there are others of generous and feeling dispositions, who, borne down by the pressure of accumulated afflictions, derive no

advantage from their sensibility, unless it be a privilege to have a more exquisite perception of misery. There are those who could bear adversity in their own persons with tolerable composure, but feel a tenfold distress by seeing others involved with them, whose peace is dearer to them than their own. Help me to be thankful! I have no rent-rolls, or stock securities, to rely upon. But I have an inventory of another kind, a single article of which is preferable, in my eyes, to all the wealth of the Indies: health, content, liberty, love, the recollection of the past, and therein a lively image of what I may yet hope for, when it shall please God, in his good time, to restore me home, to receive from you in one hour, an ample recompense for the toils of a whole voyage.

At Sea, November 23.

I AIM, as well as I can, to mingle the agreeable and useful, in the course of my letters; and to offer what may entertain *you*, and, at the same time, improve us *both*. Our mutual happy affection supplies me with my largest fund, for the first purpose; and I am glad when I can properly introduce such reflections as may assist us in making our present satisfactions subservient to a still higher end. You will not be displeased with me for saying, that though you are dearer to me than the aggregate of all other earthly comforts, I wish to limit my passion within those bounds which God has appointed. Our love to each other, ought to lead us to love him supremely who is the author and source of all the good we possess or hope for. It is to him we owe that happiness in the marriage state which so

many seek in vain; some of whom set out with such hopes and prospects, that their disappointments can be deduced from no other cause, than their having placed that high regard on a creature, which is due only to the Creator. He therefore withholds his blessing, (without which no union can subsist,) and their expectations, of course, end in satiety and indifference.

Perfect happiness cannot be attained in this life; but to come as near it as possible, well deserves our close application. As persons differ much in their views and inclinations, this attempt has been pursued by a great variety of mediums. The heathen philosophers were divided by a diversity of opinions, but they all agreed in an endeavour to teach mankind how to make the most of the good which life affords; and to bear its evils with the best grace possible. Some proposed one sort of rules; others afford new ones, and perhaps quite opposite to the former; but experience confuted them all. Being ignorant of the original nature, the true end, and the future destination of man, they failed in the cure of the evils under which he laboured, because they knew not the source from which they sprung. Some attempted to eradicate the passions, and placed happiness in a calmness, or rather an insensibility of soul; not reflecting that the Creator does nothing in vain, and that we have not a single *natural* inclination in our frame, but what he designed should, under a proper restriction, be gratified. But while they endeavoured to guard against care, and to restrain irregularity, their schemes tended to destroy some of our most distinguishing properties, and to exclude all tenderness and generosity of sentiment. Others, to avoid this absurdity, fell into a greater, if possible. By supposing the greatest happiness to consist in the most constant enjoyment of

sensual pleasure, they opened a wide door to folly and enormity; and left each person to pursue his own propensity, under the notion of pleasure, without having recourse to any standard by which to regulate their conduct. These were the two very different plans of those who are generally deemed the wisest men among the ancients, the Stoics and the Epicureans. The one *pretended*, that the world afforded nothing worthy of their notice. The other *found*, there was nothing in the world deserving of the value they set upon it.

We are relieved from this uncertainty by the Gospel, which has brought life and immortality, true happiness and the means of attaining it, to light. And when we count over the various blessings we enjoy, we should always acknowledge, in the first place, this pledge and ground-work of every other mercy, that we were born in an age and a country affording us plain and sure instruction concerning our real interest and bounden duty, and how inseparably they are joined together. The Scripture teaches us how to enjoy prosperity in its full relish, by considering every instance of it as a gift and token of the divine goodness, always attentive to bless us; and likewise abates the pressure of adversity, by showing us how much our worst sufferings fall short of our demerits; how much more our Lord and Saviour endured for our sakes; and by the assurance it gives, that if we love God, all things, even those which at present are most disagreeable, shall work together for our final good. Now, whatever troubles we meet with, we can look beyond them all to an everlasting rest. The hour of death, so much dreaded by others, will put the true Christian in possession of eternal life. These things, reason, unassisted by revelation, could never have discovered.

The Christian religion is a consistent system, including the truth and morality of every sect of philosophy, and avoiding the errors of each. We now see the use and excellence of the passions, when duly regulated; though they render us unhappy when misapplied, because then they fall short of their proper end; for God, who (as the Scripture says) made us for himself, has formed us, with a vastness of capacity which he only can satisfy. And from hence proceeds that restlessness and disappointment, that love of change, which is the portion of those who place their highest desires and strongest hopes on any thing beneath the supreme good. We can now say, that pleasure is our chief happiness, by using the word with a propriety unknown to the Epicureans. We seek for pleasure, but it must be of the noblest kind, and most lasting duration. Upon this maxim we cheerfully renounce every present pleasure which, in its consequence, would occasion a pain greater, or more lasting, than the pleasure proposed; and we can welcome troubles, when we clearly perceive they are but light and momentary, if compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to which they lead. This is an abstract of my principles, and, I believe, of yours likewise. These shall support us when we shall be constrained to leave each other; and these, I trust, shall join us again in a better world, to part no more for ever.

Plantanes, December 10.

The three sheets enclosed will bring my history down to the end of November. I arrived in safety at Shebar,

the second instant; found my friend Harry* well, and very glad to see me. Your picture, if it could speak, might tell you how well pleased his *first* lady was with your present; for she dressed herself in it before *you*, and seemed to think that, in her new attire, she might stand in competition with you. I believe you will smile at her vanity, and think I pay you no great compliment, in preferring your *picture* to her *reality*. But had the finest woman in England stood by, she would, in my eye, have fallen almost equally short upon the comparison.

I often look back, with a mixture of thankfulness and regret, upon the time we lately passed together at Liverpool, which I consider as the happiest part of my life. I never before had so much of your company, in an equal space, and with so little interruption. Seven such weeks are preferable to seven years of common time. After so many sheets and quires as I have written to you, I cannot always produce what is new. But the thoughts with which your love inspires me are too interesting to be irksome, though often repeated.

Accept my thanks for your valuable, or invaluable, letter of the 28th of October, which I have just received. I thank you, likewise, for your punctual observance of our stated hour of retirement, which has been seldom omitted on my part; though sometimes hurry of business, or want of opportunity, *have* prevented *me*. But if I slip the appointed minute, no business or company can prevent me from putting up, at least, frequent

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* Henry Tucher, a Mulatto, at Shebar, was the man with whom I had the largest connexion in business, and by whom I was never deceived.

heart-felt ejaculations on your behalf. I congratulate Mr. B**** upon the agreeable company he had to London. I think the journey was at least as favourable to him as to you. I am sure I would rather have had his seat in the post-chaise than his office, however lucrative or honourable, unless you were annexed to it. But I remember, as friar Bacon's head said, Time was. I have been happy, and hope to be so again.

1754.

Shebar, January 10.

I OFTEN lose myself insensibly, in the recollection of our past times; and purchase the recall of the most valued pleasures at the expense of only a transient sigh. I think of our evening walks and retirements, when the setting sun, the trees, the birds, and prospects, have contributed to enrich the scene; though your company was, to me, that which completed and crowned the whole. I reflect with pleasure on some seasons, when our thoughts have risen faster than words could give them utterance, and we have surprised the tears silently stealing down our cheeks. What would the gay and fashionable world say to such a representation? They live in too much hurry, and have too little reflection, to understand this elegance of soul, which, under the guise of grief, affords the sincerest pleasure. My own experience would almost lead me to maintain what you, perhaps, will think a paradox—That they who best love, are best qualified to support the pains and anxieties of absence. Such trains of thought as I have mentioned, yield me more satisfaction than all the gewgaws of

the great or wealthy could do. But it will not therefore follow, that people who are indifferent when together, are better pleased when asunder. In the former case, they are soon weary of each other; in the latter they are soon weary of themselves. However, to me, the past and the future afford abundant subject for agreeable musing; and even the present, though not very agreeable in itself, becomes in some measure so, when I consider that I am here for your sake. And I am glad of the opportunity of manifesting that neither difficulties, nor dangers, nor distance, nor time, can abate the sense of what I owe you. However the case may be now, I can remember the time when you could have done very well without me. The first obligation, which was the ground of every other, was entirely on your side; and I still think myself far short of repaying it. Though, if I could cancel that, you have taken care to superadd new ones every succeeding day since.

Rio Junk, January 17.

In the midst of a thousand hurries and avocations, I must steal a few minutes to converse with you. I have been almost wearied to-day with noise, heat, smoke, and business; but when I think of you, the inconvenience is gone. Which of your learned philosophers can define this wonderful, transforming thing called Love, that can infuse a degree of pleasure into trouble and disquiet?

The ship that is to take my packet, is upon the point of sailing. I must wind up all, with fervent prayers, that it may please the Lord, the giver of all good, to preserve us in peace and dependence during the ap-

pointed term of our separation; and, in his good hour, to give us a happy meeting; and that we may learn to wait for that time with patience, with more than patience, with thankfulness that our prospects are only delayed, or prorogued, and not wholly cut off, as has been the case with many since we first joined hands. Above all, I pray, that in every scene of life we may prepare for what we know must, sooner or later, take place; that we may believe and act upon the principles of the Gospel, to the glory of our Maker and Redeemer here, and then we shall be happy for ever hereafter beyond the reach of sorrow or pain, and shall never more know what it is to part.

Rio Sestos, January 21.

Lord Orrey remarks, upon a letter of Pliny (whom, I think, I formerly mentioned) to his wife's aunt, that the examples of delicate conjugal love have been few. He says, "Men cannot, or will not, see the excellencies of their wives. From the day of marriage, the woman lays aside her reserve, and the man his civility. She grows forward and overbearing; he becomes sour and snappish. Or if they appear fond, (as, from the novelty of the state, it sometimes happens,) the grossness of the passion is too nauseous to be named." Whenever I meet with an observation of this kind, it is an unspeakable pleasure to me to reflect, that I can put in an exception to it, in both your name and my own. Were I even assured that the whole time since Pliny and Calphurnia lived (which is more than sixteen hundred years) afforded only forty such happy couples, I should not scruple to include you and myself in the number.

And in this consciousness, I find more pleasure than the greatest affluence of wealth could give me. I have enough. I have all in that mutual affection with which it has pleased God to bless us, and without which, the treasures of both the Indies would, to me, be useless and tasteless. I think I have now some right to speak thus; for the experience of nearly four years has convinced me, that either the novelty so much talked of, is not necessary to my satisfaction; or else, which amounts to the same thing, that I find some new cause of endearment in you every day.

Rio Sestos, January 25.

I EXPECTED, before I left England, that the present voyage would not prove successful, in point of profit; and I was not mistaken. I shall hardly reach the half of my last year's purchase. I hope the vessel I have bought, to trade after I am gone, may secure the owners' interest; but my own part of the affair will probably be moderate enough.

If a sigh should escape you on this account, I beg you to recollect yourself, and not indulge a second. Remember, that this failure in dirty money matters is the only abatement we have hitherto met with; and that, in other respects, we have as much the advantage of those who are envied by the world, as we fall short of them in riches. We have blessings which riches cannot purchase, nor compensate for the want of. And I see much cause for thankfulness that things are no worse. We want for nothing at present; and for the future, we may safely rely on the good Providence that has done

so much for us already. Besides, what *I* may get by an indifferent voyage, would, by many, be thought a great sum. We are both sensible that we are too short-sighted to choose well for ourselves, if the choice were allowed us; and, therefore, I hope we shall agree to resign our concerns to the disposal of a better wisdom than our own.

When I look back, and reflect upon the difficulties from which I have been relieved, and the advantages I have obtained beyond my former hopes and probabilities, it would be very disingenuous in me to distress myself about small matters. Nor need I be over-anxious upon your account, for God can as easily provide for us, now we are joined in one interest, as if we had continued separate. If we make our chief application for what chiefly deserves it, we are assured that all inferior good things, in such a measure and manner as is most expedient for us, will surely be added to us. Perhaps we may not be rich—no matter. We are rich in love. We are rich indeed, if the promises and providence of God are our inheritance. And at present, we have every convenience, and I can think of no one thing, really desirable, the greatest sum of money could procure us, which we have not already, unless it were to free us from the necessity of these frequent and long separations.

This thought, indeed, were I to yield to my first emotions, would make me more fond of gold than a miser; though, in every other view, I can despise it. But when I am cool, as my conscience tells me that I am unworthy of so great a blessing, so my experience persuades me that probably I cannot, as yet, be safely trusted with it. Perhaps the event might prove worse than any thing which has hitherto befallen us. I am

willing, indeed, to hope it would be otherwise, but my heart is deceitful, and has, more than once, deceived me in this very point. I might grow secure, and gradually neglect the due improvement of such an addition to my talents. Nay, such is the unhappy depravity of human nature, that I cannot be sure I might not, in time, be permitted, for my punishment, to forget what I owe to you. It is true, that at this moment of writing, it seems quite as easy for me to forget to speak, or to breathe; but there is an unhappy gradation, often observable in the course of life, by which people, from insensible beginnings, are carried on to things which once they could not have thought of without horror. The first deviations from the paths of duty and peace are scarcely discernible, but they become wider and wider.

I must recall, or soften, this last supposition; for I cannot bear even to suppose it. Can I possibly forget you? I hope not. Surely it would be better for me to be condemned to the mines for life, than to be deprived of that grateful confidence with which my heart at this instant overflows—that I am yours, and that you are mine. This, I trust, will be among the last reflections I shall be capable of making in this world. But, that it may be so, I wish to acquiesce in whatever methods it shall please God to appoint for the continuance of my affection. Perhaps he sees that these intervals of absence are the best means for preserving me from an evil which I dread more than a dungeon or a galley. If it were otherwise, or whenever I attain strength sufficient to bear the indulgence without abusing it, he can easily put it in our power to live together here till we are meet to be removed to a happy hereafter. That great word *Eternity*, rightly understood, is a cure for every evil, and casts a shade upon the brightest prospects that all

on this side the grave can furnish. To us, I hope, it will be an eternity of happiness.

February 2.

Among the many congratulations you will probably receive to-day, I believe you will think none more sincere or acceptable than mine; though, perhaps, I am in nothing more singular or unfashionable than in my manner of expressing them. The return of your birth-day requires from me an acknowledgment of the same kind as the return of my own. I commemorate both in the same manner. I was up long before the sun this morning, to invoke a blessing upon you, and to pray that this may prove a happy birth-day to you, in my sense of the word. I am writing in a tornado. The elements seem all at war over my head, but I thank God I have peace within; and the storm does not interrupt my thoughts of you.

The day reminds me of that (prophetical, shall I call it) agreement between your mother and mine, when we were in leading-strings; that, if we lived to grow up we should be man and wife. There seems, indeed, nothing extraordinary in such a discourse taking place between intimate friends. But as, afterwards, the intercourse between our families was totally broken off for many years, and renewed by me, in the most contingent, and as the phrase is, accidental manner, when I did not even rightly know your name; add to this, the unusual impression the first sight of you made upon my mind, when we were both so young that I knew not what, or why, I loved: and further, the many difficulties which attended my pursuit, which

was begun, and carried on for years, against the advice and consent of all your friends, and of all mine; and what seemed the greatest bar of all, against your own inclination likewise;—I say, taking all these circumstances together, I cannot but think it remarkable that we were so particularly laid out for each other when we were infants. However this may be, I have abundant reason to praise the Lord, that before I had been four years in the world, he should provide for me, in you, the greatest blessing of my life; with which he purposed to enhance and crown all his other mercies to me; and that you might be, in time, as a guardian angel, to preserve me from ruin. I desire to praise him for all the goodness that has followed you, from the hour I am commemorating to this day; for the gracious protection which preserved you for me through your early years; for your health and satisfaction since you have been mine; and for enabling me, thus far, to answer the trust you have reposed in me. And I humbly pray that our affections and engagements may be preserved inviolable between ourselves, and in a proper subordination to what we owe to him, the great Lord of all.

Settera Crue, February 6.

I HAVE calculated, that if all the letters I have sent you since our first parting, in May, 50, were transcribed in order, they would fill one hundred and twenty such sheets as this, on all sides. An eye, less favourable than yours, might find very many faults in so large a collection; but if they have the merit of pleasing you, it pleases me more to have written them, than if I had published so many volumes, to be applauded

by the world. I hope I need not be ashamed of them, if they were to fall into other hands. I hope I have, in general, expressed my regard in terms which reason and religion will warrant. I consider our union as a peculiar effect and gift of an indulgent Providence; and, therefore, as a talent to be improved to higher ends, to the promoting his will and service upon earth, and to the assisting each other to prepare for an eternal state, to which a few years, at the furthest, will introduce us. Were these points wholly neglected, however great our satisfaction might be for the present, it would be better never to have seen each other; since the time must soon come, when, of all the endearments of our connexion, nothing will remain but the consciousness how greatly we were favoured, and how we improved the favours we possessed. We shall hereafter have reason to be thankful, even for these frequent separations, if they should conduce to fix these views more effectually in our minds. With such thoughts I endeavour to oppose my impatience to see you. My occasional anxieties, and my indifference to every thing around me, when you are not with me, I compare to the sense of feeling which often costs a person pain; but if he were destitute of it, he would be incapable of pleasure, and little better than dead. If my heart were not susceptive of love and tenderness, I might escape many a twinge; but I have not suffered enough to make me envy those whose whole thought and solicitude terminate on their own dear selves.

Settera Crue, February 12.

What I daily acknowledge as the greatest blessing of my life, the return of this day reminds me to notice more particularly. It is the anniversary of our marriage; a point I had so much at heart; in which I had long so little probability of succeeding, was so very unworthy of success, and which has so happily answered, I may indeed say exceeded my expectation;—when I consider all these items together, I am at a loss for words to express my thankfulness to God. For four whole years I have possessed the height of my wishes. I do not except even these necessary intervals of absence; because I have been enabled to support them as well as I myself can desire; and because the consciousness of your affection, of which neither absence nor distance can deprive me, affords me a continual feast.

I arose before the sun to pray and give thanks for you, and to beg that you may always find as much satisfaction as you have raised me to; and that we may both have grace to act answerably to the advantages we have above thousands. If you look round upon those of your acquaintance who have entered the marriage state about the time we did, I believe you will find but few who do not, in some degree, betray a sense of disappointment; or, who are so entirely satisfied with each other as, I trust, we are. I do not mean to form a comparison with any one in my own favour. Sincerity and tenderness are the chief of my inventory; but if I ever grow richer in accomplishments, both the praise and the profit ought to be yours; and who can

tell how far a desire to appear deserving of you may, at length, carry me?

The occasion might now lead me to a more serious strain, and to consider how we may make these blossoms of temporal good bear fruit for eternity; but for this, I shall at present refer you to what I wrote on your birth day. Let us remember, that in all situations, whether pleased or pained, we are equally advancing towards an unchangeable eternity. It is a part of human happiness, if rightly understood, to know that the very best of it must, ere long, be parted with for something unspeakably better.

Rio Junque, March 1.

I STILL continue in health, and all is well, excepting one late circumstance, which has given me, as you will believe, much concern; but I have now got over it. Not to keep you in suspense, longer than just to prevent surprise, I must inform you that all my schemes in favour of Captain L**** are at an end. I told you, in a former letter, that I had bought a vessel upon the coast, and had given him the command of her. He went from me in good spirits, and with high hopes, but was seized with a fever before he had left me three weeks, which proved fatal to him in about eight days. I have been much affected by this sudden stroke. I have known him long, and believe he had a true regard for me: and it was by my inducement that he came hither. There are other reasons for my concern, which I need not mention to you. But the will of God has taken place, and it is my part to submit.

May we both profit from this recent and awful in-

stance of the vanity and uncertainty of human life, and of all relating to it. A healthy constitution and sprightly temper afford no security from death. How many such have I seen cut off upon this coast! And yet I, though supposed by many people to be in a consumption, and not likely to hold out for one voyage, am preserved from year to year! Let us feel the expediency of preparing for a change, which, sooner or later, we must experience. The death of every friend is a warning to the survivors. And yours and mine will, perhaps, by some of our acquaintance who knew how much we loved, and how happy we were in each other, be alleged as a new proof that even those temporal satisfactions which will best abide the test of reflection, are no less frail and transient than any other.

I am in such a scene of confusion and noise, that I hardly know what I write. I only read, or think, as it were, by starts.

At Sea, April 8.

It is a whole fortnight since I wrote to you, and seems to me much longer. I know you will charge my silence to the hurry of business, and not to neglect. But I can now make you amends, by informing you that I am, once more, clear of the coast of Guinea. I sailed from Shebar yesterday morning. I have left my chief mate, Mr. W****, in possession of the Race-Horse, (the vessel which I purchased for Capt. L.) with about a thousand pounds worth of my cargo, which I could not dispose of in the limited term of my stay on the coast; which I hope will save the voyage to the owners. As to my

own profit, though it may not be so great as might have been expected, I hope it will be sufficient. A safe return to you will make up all deficiencies.

This has been a fatal season to many persons upon the coast. I think I never before heard of so many dead, lost, or destroyed, in one year. But I have been kept in perfect health, and have buried neither White nor Black. Let us praise God for his singular goodness to us, and take encouragement to hope and pray that he will crown this voyage also with a comfortable meeting. Amen.

At Sea, April 18.

A FEW days ago I informed you that I had left Africa, in good health and spirits. It has now pleased God to give me, in my own person, an experience of that uncertainty of all human affairs, which I have so often remarked in the concerns of others.

I have been ill three days of a fever, which, though it is at present attended with no symptoms particularly dangerous, it behooves me to consider may terminate in death. I have endeavoured to compose myself to the summons, if it should so prove. And I hope I may say, I am, in some measure, ready to live or to die, as may be appointed; and that I desire not to choose for myself, in this case, more than in any other. One specious excuse, with which I have often covered my desire of life, was, that I might have opportunity of doing something for the glory of God and the good of my fellow-creatures; that I might not go quite useless out of the world. But, alas! I have so little improved the talents and occasions which have been already afforded

me, that I am ashamed to offer this plea any more. My only remaining concern is upon your account; and, even in that, I am in a measure relieved, from the following considerations.

My first and principal consolation is in the hope that we are both under the influence of religious principles, and that you, as well as myself, are persuaded that no trouble or change can befall us by chance. Whenever a separation shall take place, as, if not now, it sooner or later must; it will be by the express act and will of the same wise and good Providence which brought us together at first, has given us so much in each other already, and has continually shielded us, as yet, from the various harms which have been fatal to many of our acquaintance. Further, I consider that *The time is short.* If I go now, in a few years, perhaps much sooner, you will follow me, I hope in the same path, depending wholly on the divine mercy, through faith in the blood and mediation of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, according to the plain, literal terms of the Gospel. It is in this faith I am now happy. This bears me, in a measure, above my fears and sins, above my sickness, and above the many agreeable views I had formed in my mind upon a happy return to you. May this be your support, your guide, and shield, and I can ask no more for you. Then you will, at last, attain complete and unfading happiness; and we shall meet again, and, perhaps, to join in recollecting the scenes we have been engaged in together while upon earth. Then, probably, we shall clearly see what I now believe, and from which I derive another reason for acquiescence—that as the goodness of God first joined us, so it was his mercy that parted us again; mercy to each, to both of us.

We have, perhaps, been sometimes too happy in each other; to have been always, or longer so, might have betrayed us into a dangerous security. We might have forgotten our present duty and our future destination. It has been too much the case already: I have greatly failed myself, and I have been but a poor example for you. Should it, therefore, please God to make my death the happy occasion of fixing your dependence, hope, and desire upon him alone, surely I can say, Thy will be done. My heart bleeds when I represent to myself the grief with which such an event would overwhelm you. But I know that He can moderate and sanctify it, and give you cause hereafter to say, It was good for you to have been afflicted; and, ere long, the time will come when all tears shall be wiped both from your eyes and mine.*

At Sea, April 30.

It has pleased God to give me another reprieve. The fever has left me, and I feel my strength returning. You will congratulate me on my recovery. I thank you. But let us not be too secure. A relapse may soon happen; or twenty unforeseen events may, without sickness, prove equally decisive. I hope I am, in some measure, thankful for the present, and not anxious about the future; for the Lord will appoint what is best for us. My head was much confused when I wrote last; but I shall let it stand as a specimen of my thoughts in the hour of trial. I endeavoured, from the first, to compose my mind for departure hence, if such should be the will of God. And my belief of the Gospel (which I once despised) made me tolerably easy and resigned.

When this grand point was, according to my poor attainment, settled, you were the chief, the sole object of my remaining solicitude; and I was desirous of leaving a few lines, while the fever did not render me quite incapable of writing, to certify you in what manner I was enabled to meet my summons; and to leave you my farewell advice, my blessing, and my thanks. But before I could finish what I intended, the occasion was mercifully removed.

I hope the remembrance of this visitation will be a long and constant benefit to me, and will give me a better sense of the value of health, which I had been favoured with so long, that it seemed almost a thing of course. I bless God for restoring it to me again. If it be his will, I shall be glad to live a little longer, upon many accounts; and among the chief, for your sake. And, oh! may it please him to spare you for me likewise, and to grant that we may again meet in peace! My eyes will not yet allow me to write much.

At Sea, May 16.

I SEND this by a vessel which will probably arrive in England before you can have any news of me from St. Christopher's, to inform you that the Lord has brought us safely within about a week's sail of that island. I have before mentioned the death of Capt. L****, which was, indeed, a trial; but I soon acquiesced, as I ought always, in the will of God. When I consider, It is the Lord, should not I add, Let him do as seemeth him good?

There is, indeed, one trial to which I always stand exposed; should this come, my heart and conscience

give me cause to fear that not only moral arguments, but the poor attainments I have made in religion would fail, unless I was immediately strengthened from above. And I humbly trust I shall be, if I am ever called to a scene, which, at present, overpowers my spirits when I but transiently think of it. Yes! God could enable me to resign you also! He has promised strength according to our day; and he is compassionate and faithful.

Since I left Africa, I have been ill of a fever. It was rather violent, but unattended with pains, delirium, or any threatening symptom, and lasted but eight or ten days. Though it was not of the most dangerous species, I thought it right to consider it as a warning to prepare for eternity: and I praise God, the principles upon which I aim to rest my hope when in health, did not fail me in sickness. In surrendering myself entirely to the mercy and care of my Lord and Saviour, my hopes so much exceeded my fears, that had it been his will, I seemed contented to give up, even all those prospects which your love and a happy return to you afforded me, (for, at that time, no other temporal prospects had the least weight with me,) and to have died in the midst of the pathless ocean, at a distance from every friend. If my senses had not failed, I should have died praying that you might be supported, and the stroke sanctified to you. I wrote a letter to you in my illness, (confused as my head was,) when I was not without apprehension that it would be the last service my hand would perform for me. But the Lord has been merciful to me: I am not only still living, but perfectly recovered!

St. Kitt's, Sandy Point, May 30.

We arrived here the 21st instant, and I received your dear obliging letter of the 16th of February.

Before now, I hope you have received an account of my celebration of your birth-day, and the happy consequence of it, the day of our marriage. You say you endeavoured to imitate me on the return of these days, not only in observing them, but in the same manner. My own attempts are so unsuitable to what I could wish, that I cannot suppose yours inferior to them. I hope you will always copy after a more perfect pattern. Our prayers have been thus far answered, and I hope the hour of meeting is not very distant. You will be the more sensible of this mercy, when you receive information of my illness, on the passage, and that my life was, for a day or two, thought very dubious by those about me. My health was restored at sea; but, for want of fresh provisions and proper nourishment, (for I had distributed my stock among the sick seamen before I was taken ill myself,) I continued rather faint and weak; but now, at Mr. G****'s, I have not only necessaries, but delicacies, and allow myself more indulgence than usual, with a view of recruiting.

I am glad you think my picture like me. I cannot persuade myself to think so of yours; yet I frequently look at it, and talk to it, because you sat for it; and I can supply the defects of it from my mind, where the dear original is painted, or rather engraved, to the greatest exactness. There I have traces impressed which no pencil could copy; a lively representation, not only of your person, but of your heart.

Now and then I have been constrained to omit our noon-tide appointment; but in general I have observed it with much pleasure, and have found it one of my best alleviations of your absence. At present the time falls out with me about eight in the morning, which is rather inconvenient; but I try to make it up, more or less, through the day; and I believe that one waking hour of my life, since I parted with you, has seldem passed without some breathing of prayer in your behalf.

Sandy Point, June 7.

I HAVE found fewer opportunities of writing than I expected; but, before the close of this month, I hope to be at sea myself, on my way home. Remember what I have formerly written upon such occasions, to prevent your uneasiness; or rather, remember what the Lord has written for your encouragement: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." In all the dangers and difficulties that may affect either of us, our God is ever present. May we learn to sanctify him in our hearts, and to make him our dread, and we need fear nothing. It is my daily earnest prayer that you may find peace and comfort in his promises, which are all yea and amen in Jesus our Redeemer, to them who trust in his atonement and mediation. If we have him on our side, nothing can be against us, so as to separate us from his love Through him we shall prove more than conquerors. But if we rely on ourselves, or on any thing else short of that only Rock of salvation, we shall be confused and shaken.

The enclosed was written chiefly during my sickness,

after leaving the coast. I had some expectation it would have been my last; but God was merciful to me. I desired to live upon your account, and my desire was granted. At present I am in perfect health, and happy in the hope of being soon restored to you again.

Sandy Point, June 13.

I HAVE picked up a valuable acquaintance here, of whom I hope to tell you more soon. I was going to say he is one of my stamp; but he is far beyond me, in all that I most desire. I hope his example and converse will prove to my advantage. We are always together when business will permit: and the last fortnight has been the most pleasant time I have spent during my absence from you. To be from you, is, indeed, an abatement to every pleasure. But I hope I make some advance in submission to the will of God. I have resigned all into his hands, and while separate from you, that is, from all that I hold dear in this world, I perceive in some degree His presence, whose loving kindness is better than life itself.

A vessel arrived to-day from London, which brought many letters, but none for me. It is no matter. I trust in the Lord; and this keeps me from uneasiness. I was more afraid than hurt for want of letters here last voyage; and I hope I shall not be weak enough to grieve again without just grounds.

At Sea, June 24.

I LEFT St. Kitt's the 20th instant, and am now about six hundred miles on my way homewards, in perfect health and peace.

I had a sacramental opportunity while there, on Whitsunday, and was glad to embrace it. The service was, indeed, poorly administered, by a man whose only distinguishing mark of a minister, I believe, was his gown and surplice. But I aimed to look beyond the man, to the Lord; and I hope I received a blessing. You may be sure I thought of you upon the occasion. I hoped that you were engaged that day in the same manner; and I earnestly prayed, as I do daily, that every appointed mean of grace may be made effectual to your present comfort and final salvation. This is the one thing needful; which I ask with solicitude. I am more cool as to our temporal concerns, because I know we are not competent to choose for ourselves; and, therefore, I am content with begging a blessing upon them in general terms; so far as they may most conduce to the promoting his glory and our eternal welfare; resigning the particulars to the wise and merciful disposal of God. And I can say, to his praise, that things never succeeded more to my mind than since I have been taught to aim at this method. May we be interested in the covenant, which is well ordered in all points, and sure; and then, both great mercies, and small mercies (if any mercies could with propriety, be deemed small) will be ours of course. Then we need be anxious about nothing; but, as occasions arise, make known our requests to God; and, if what

we ask be really good for us, we shall certainly have it. The apostle's argument upon this head is unanswerable: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things?" That powerful love which brought down the Most High to assume our nature, to suffer, and to die for us, will not permit those who depend on him to want what is really good for them.

At Sea, July 6.

To-morrow will be a feast-day with you, if, as I hope, you are well. My thoughts and prayers will attend you at the Lord's table. May you have his presence and blessing in all his ordinances! It is my allotment to be seldom favoured with the benefit of Christian communion, and public ordinances; but, I thank the Lord, I know that He, who is rich in mercy is, in every place, equally nigh to all who call upon him. Neither in the wilds of Guinea, nor in the pathless ocean, am I wholly without his gracious presence. Yet, were it lawful for me to choose, I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in splendour at a distance from it. However, it is a great satisfaction to me, that you, who are dear to me as my own heart, have always in your power the privileges which are but now and then permitted to me.

Two very different errors are frequent concerning the Lord's supper. The first is, of those who keep away because, as they say, they are unworthy. If they mean, that they are determined to persist in those courses which are directly contrary to the design of

our Redeemer's life and death, they certainly have no business at his table: but, alas! what will they do if death should summon them, in this hardened disposition, to his tribunal? But with respect to those who mourn for their sins, and strive, and pray against them, it is an artifice of the tempter to deter them from the Lord's table, because they are sinners; when it is a sure and glorious truth, that sinners are the very persons invited. The whole need not the physician, but the sick. All the ordinances, and particularly this, are designed to strengthen the weak, to confirm the doubtful, and to raise them that are fallen. Unbelief and a legal temper dishonour the Gospel, and disquiet the soul; and, indeed, the objection is founded in pride; for they own, that if they were better, as it is called, they would readily attend. But it is best for us to renounce all seeming good in ourselves, and, as helpless, worthless sinners, to rely wholly on the mercy of God, in Jesus Christ.

There is an opposite error. Many rush upon this sacrament as though it were a mere ceremony, or a civil institution to qualify for an office; or a sponge to wipe off their past offences, that they may begin a new score. They have no sense of the evil of sin, and, therefore, cannot know their need of a Saviour. But they presume that God is merciful, and are quieted. He is, indeed, merciful beyond our conception, and he has shown himself so in the method of reconciliation; but he has declared the way in which he will show mercy, and there is no other. For a person to partake of that bread, and of that cup, which exhibit to us the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of God for our sins, and yet wilfully to continue in the practice of those sins, which it cost him all his agonies in the garden, and

upon the cross, to expiate, is, as much as in him lies, to crucify the Son of God afresh, and to put him to open shame.

At Sea, July 13.

Of all the authors I have read, who have occasionally treated of a married life, and of the inadvertencies, on both sides, by which it is too often rendered unhappy, I do not remember one who has touched upon the greatest evil of all, I mean our wretched propensity to lay the foundation of our proposed happiness independent of God. If we are happy in a mutual affection when we set out, we are too apt to think that nothing more is wanting; and to suppose our own prudence and good judgment sufficient to carry us on to the end. But that it is not so, in fact, we have daily proof, from the example of numbers, who, notwithstanding a sincere regard to each other at first, and the advantages of good sense, and good temper, in general, yet, by some hidden causes, gradually become cool and indifferent, and at length burdensome, perhaps hateful, to each other. This event is often noticed, and excites surprise, because few can properly account for it. But I see few marriages commenced which give me hope of a more favourable issue.

It is an undoubted truth, that the Most High God, who is ever present with and over his creatures, is the author and giver of all that is agreeable or comfortable to us in this world. We cannot be either easy in ourselves, or acceptable to others, but by his favour; and, therefore, when we presume to use his creature-comforts without consulting and acknowledging him in them, his honour is concerned to disappoint us. Dream-

ing of sure satisfaction in the prosecution or enjoyment of our own desires, we do but imitate the builders of Babel, who said, Go to, let us build a tower, to get ourselves a name. So we, too often, when circumstances smile upon us, vainly think of securing happiness upon earth; a sensual happiness, and on an earth that stands accursed and subject to vanity for our sins. In every state and scene of life there are instances of this folly; but, perhaps, it is in no one more insinuating and plausible, than in the commencement of marriage between those whose hearts are united. But, alas! God looks down upon such short-sighted projectors as he did upon those of old. He pours contempt upon their designs; he divides their language; he permits separate views and interests to rise in their minds; their fair scheme of happiness degenerates into confusion; and they are left under the reproach of having begun to build what they will never be able to finish. This is the true cause of half the unhappiness complained of and observed among those who come together by their own consent. Not for want of good-will at first, nor for want of any necessary qualification in themselves; but because, neglecting to own and to seek God in their concerns, he has refused them that blessing without which no union can subsist.

You will not ask me how we set out, and in what manner our happy connexion has been conducted. But perhaps you will see much reason to ask (I am sure I do) why we have succeeded so much better than others? and why we, unlike the most of our acquaintance, have preserved our regard unabated, and all our obligations fresh upon our mind, into the middle of our fifth year? I cannot pretend that it is owing to my being duly dependent, and humble, in ascribing all my

blessings to the Lord; or to my having enjoyed them with an eye to his glory. Alas! I have given way to the evils which I knew I ought to avoid, and have neglected the good to which my conscience called me. But it is because the Lord, in all his dealings with me, has been wonderfully, singularly merciful and favourable. By his grace he brought me from a state of apostasy, to the knowledge of his Gospel; and by his good providence, he has no less distinguished me in temporals. He brought me, as I may say, out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; from slavery and famine on the coast of Africa, into my present easy situation. And he brought me from the most abandoned scenes of profligacy, when I was sunk into a complacency with the vilest wretches, to make me happy in the possession of your heart and person. And thus he has continued to me, in your love and its endearing consequences, all that I hold valuable in life for so many years; though I have not endeavoured, in the manner I ought, to deserve you for one whole day. Often the consciousness of my disingenuous behaviour has made my heart tremble upon your account. I have feared lest you should be snatched away, for my punishment. But the Lord is God, and not man. As in a thousand instances, so particularly in this, I may well say, He has not dealt with me according to my sins, nor rewarded me after my iniquities. He has neither separated us by death, nor involved us in heavy afflictions, nor suffered our affections to fail. Let us praise him for these three articles, for there is scarcely one couple in a thousand that is favoured with them all for an equal space of time.

Mr. Addison has treated, with propriety, on the want of complaisance, the improper freedoms, and

several other failings, which, though seemingly of no great immediate importance themselves, may, in time, give rise to serious and abiding disgusts. The faults which he mentions are to be guarded against; but to attend to these only will not be sufficient. Philosophy and reasoning have their use; but religion alone can teach us how to use the good things of this world without abusing them; and to make our earthly comforts blessings indeed, by improving them to a further view; by tracing them, as streams, to their fountain; by extending our views, from time to eternity; and making our mutual affection a mean of raising our desires to the great Lord of all. But herein, alas! I have greatly failed hitherto. And perhaps this is the reason why I am so long and so often separated from you. I now see that I may number it among my greatest mercies, that I was not permitted to remain always at home with you. Perhaps, by this time, I might have been hardened into an entire neglect of my duty to God, and my most essential duty to you; but by being forced to leave you, again and again, I have had opportunity and leisure for reflection, and, I would hope, at length, for repentance. You have been much mistaken in your opinion of me. Your kind partiality has thought me very good, when, indeed, I have been very bad; very insensible and ungrateful, not only to God but even to you. I have not properly answered the trust you have reposed in me; but I hope I shall be enabled to amend.

You say you sometimes show my letters. Though most of them are in an unfashionable strain, I am not very solicitous who may see them. I write from my heart; from a heart that is not ashamed (excepting as I have acknowledged above) in any thing relating to

you; a heart that hardly beats, but in concert to some earnest wish for your welfare; a heart that always feels the smallest instance of your kindness; a heart that would give up every pleasure this world can afford, rather than lose the joy it feels in being yours, and that you own an interest in it; a heart that would welcome any temporal troubles that might be a mean of final good to you. Thus far I can go. There was a time when I could have gone further. Do not think my love impaired because I now desire to stop here. There was a time (what a mercy that the Lord did not tear my idol from me!) when you had that place in my heart which is only due to Him, and I regarded you as my chief good. But I hope that time is past: and never did I wish so earnestly for the first proofs of your affection, as I do now that you may be enabled to restrain it within due bounds; and that your regard may not prevent you from considering me as a frail, poor, mutable creature, unable of myself to procure you any real good, or to shield you from the smallest evil. Oh, may we adore Him, who provided us for each other; who brought us together, and has spared us so long! May we love each other till death, yea, I hope, in a future state, beyond death! And, in order to this, may we, in the first place, love him with all our heart, and soul, and strength, who first loved us, and gave himself for us, to renew our forfeited title to the good things of both worlds, and to wash us from our sins in his own blood. This was love indeed! Where were the sensibility and ingenuousness of spirit which we sometimes think we possess, that this unspeakable lover of souls has been no more noticed, no more admired and beloved, by us hitherto? Lord, make us partakers of thy divine nature, for thou art love!

At Sea, July 27.

You will observe, I have of late made an alteration in my post-days. Instead of a few lines two or three times a week, I now write a whole sheet every Saturday; and in the choice of a subject, I have an eye to the service of the following day. Thus I indulge my inclination in writing to you, without breaking the rule I have, for some time past, prescribed to myself; the forenoon of Saturday I allow for relaxation; but when I have dined, if no necessary business prevents me, I endeavour to abstract my mind from worldly concerns, and to prepare for the approaching Sabbath.

I now mean to give you some account how I pass a Sea-Sunday, when I am favoured with a tolerable frame of mind, and am enabled, by the grace of God, to obtain some tolerable mastery over the encumbrances of the flesh and the world, which, in my best hours, are too prevalent with me.

My evening devotions, when opportunity permits, commence about six o'clock, the week and the month round; and I am, sometimes, engaged a full hour or more in prayer and praise, without any remarkable weariness or repetition. *You* furnish me with much subject for both. On a Saturday evening, in particular, I beg a blessing upon your Sunday, upon your public worship and retirement. And as I know that where you are, you are unavoidably exposed to trifling company, to whom all days are alike, I pray that you may be shielded from their evil influence. I have likewise to pray for others; for our friends; for many of them by name, and according to the knowledge I have

of their circumstances; and extend my petitions to the general state of the world, that they who are strangers to the Gospel, in which I have found so much peace, may be brought to the knowledge of it; and that they who neglect and despise it, as I once did, may, like me, obtain mercy. When these, and other points, are gone over, and my praises offered for our temporal and spiritual blessings, and likewise my repeated confessions of the sins of my childhood, youth, and advanced years, as they occur to my remembrance, you will not wonder that an hour is elapsed. The remainder of the evening I pass in ruminating on the mercies of the preceding week, the subjects of my reading, or whatever I can pick useful self-conference from.

I usually rise at four on a Sunday morning. My first employ is to beg a blessing upon the day for us both; for all who, like you, are preparing to wait upon God in public, and for all who, like myself, are, for a time, excluded from that privilege. To this succeeds a serious walk upon deck. Then I read two or three select chapters. At breakfast, I eat and drink more than I talk; for I have no one here to join in such conversation as I should then choose. At the hour of your going to church, I attend you in my mind with another prayer; and at eleven o'clock the ship's bell rings my own little congregation about me. To them I read the morning service, according to the Liturgy. Then I walk the deck, and attend my observation, as we call it; that is, to know by the sun, (if it shines,) at noon, the latitude the ship is in. Then comes dinner. In the afternoon I frequently take a nap for half an hour; if not, I read, or write in a book I keep for that purpose. I wait upon you again to church in the afternoon, and convene my ship's company, as in the morning. At four o'clock

I drink tea, which recruits my spirits for the evening. Then another Scripture lesson, and a walk, brings six o'clock, which, I have told you, is my hour for stated prayer. I remember you then again, in the most particular manner; and, in trust that you are still preserved in safety for me, I endeavour to praise the Lord for his goodness so long vouchsafed to us.

But, alas! when I look back upon a day spent in this manner, I cannot express how much I have to mourn over, and be ashamed of, at night. Oh! the wanderings and faintness of my prayers; the distraction of my thoughts; the coldness of my heart, and the secret workings of pride, which debase and corrupt my best services. In short, every thought is wrong. But I remember that I am not under the law, but under grace. I rely on the promised mediation of my Saviour, renounce my own poor performances, and implore mercy, in his name and for his sake only, and that sets all to rights. I need no one to pronounce an absolution to me; I can tell myself that my sins are forgiven me, because I know in whom I have believed. This leads me to praise and adore Him, that I was born in an age and country favoured with the light of the Gospel; when there are millions of my species who have neither the means of grace nor the hope of glory; and further, that I have been called out from the unhappy apostasy, and licentiousness, and misery, into which I had plunged myself; when many thousands, who never offended to the degree I have, are either suffered to go on, from bad to worse, till there is no hope, or are cut off by a stroke, and sink into endless misery in a thoughtless moment! Lord, not unto me, but unto Thee be the praise. It was wholly the effect of thy grace; for thou

wouldest be found of me when I had not the least inclination to seek thee!

Though I have given you this account, chiefly of my passing a Sunday, it will, in the main, serve for the history of any day in any week, since I left St. Christopher's. It is thus I am enabled, ardently as I love you, to support your absence without impatience; though a re-union to you, such as our two former, includes all I can wish as to temporals. And, I trust, he who has brought me safely over two thirds of the ocean that was lately between us, will do the rest in his own good hour. And, in the mean while, blessed be his name, my time does not hang heavy upon my hands. I trust *you* choose him for your portion also. Thus we shall bear separation better, and be more happy when together, than formerly. And when we are called finally to part, (as, sooner or later, we must,) He will strengthen us according to the day of our trouble, and will assuredly unite us again to unspeakable advantage, and place us beyond the reach of every trial and every evil.

At Sea, August 5.

If our reckonings are right, I am now within a day's sail of Ireland; and I may hope (if the fair wind continues) to see Liverpool within a week. My passage thus far, like all the passages I have made since you have owned an interest in me, has been remarkably exempted from disagreeable events and apparent dangers. As I hope I shall not have occasion to send you another weekly sheet before I see you, I would employ this on a closing invitation, to join with me in praising the

great Author of all good for his numerous and repeated mercies and blessings vouchsafed to us both; and the rather at present, as this day will conclude another year of my life. How much reason have I to say, with David, "O Lord, thou crownest the year with thy goodness."

We are never in a better disposition to ask, and obtain, further favours from the Lord, than when our hearts are impressed with a grateful sense of those we have already received. *We* have, indeed, reason to praise him above many; for his dispensations to us have been singularly favourable. His goodness has been manifested from the first moments of our life; yea, still more early, from the circumstances of our birth. It was by the ordination of his kind providence, that we were born in an age and land of light and liberty, and not among the millions who have no knowledge of the means of grace, or of the hope of glory; nor among the multitudes who are trained up, from their cradles, to substitute superstition for religion. But I shall defer speaking of spiritual mercies till I have said something of our temporal blessings.

Perhaps we have sometimes been tempted to think that, because we do not possess titles and estates, and are not of high distinction and estimation in the world, we have received nothing extraordinary; but two reflections will, I hope, suffice to correct this mistake.

Let us, in the first place, think of the miseries we know or observe in the world. How many are crippled or maimed in their bodies, or disordered in their minds? How many, at this minute, are nearly perishing through extreme want of the common necessaries of life? How many are chained to their beds by sickness

and excruciating pains, and can find no ease by day or by night? not to insist on the more deplorable case of those who are suffering the agonies of a wounded spirit, or a terrified conscience. Let us reflect on the miseries and outrages which the scourge of war brings upon cities, provinces, and whole nations. Or, if those scenes are too shocking to dwell upon, it will suffice to take the estimate much lower. Let us look round us at home, amongst our own acquaintance, or, at furthest, within the bounds of the newspapers. How many fatherless—how many widows, do we hear of? How many, from happy prospects, rendered suddenly miserable by what we call casualties? Take these things together, and let us ask our consciences if a continued exemption from such a variety of evils, and a constant supply of the many wants we have in common with others, are not favours which we enjoy, and which are afforded, comparatively, to few?

But further; let us, in the second place, turn our eyes to those who are placed in the smoother walks of life, whom customary speech calls the *happy*. Run over what you know of those who are most noticed for personal qualifications, for their riches, honours, or the variety of their means and modes of pleasure: and then let us ask ourselves, if there is any one amongst all these with whom we would be content to change in all points? If we should not accept such a proposal, as surely we should not, (I answer for you, no less confidently than for myself,) it follows, evidently, that we have more to be thankful for (our own partial selves being judges) than many of those whom, perhaps, we have been disposed to envy; and if so, it is equally plain that there are no two persons upon the face of the earth more indebted to an indulgent Providence than ourselves.

If I mention particulars, I must begin with what I have most at heart, our mutual, happy affection. In this, at least, we are rich; and this is a kind of wealth, with which gold and silver will bear no comparison; nor would many cart-loads of them purchase a single grain of so great a blessing. But let us not ascribe this to ourselves. How manifest, how powerful and marvellous, was the hand of God in bringing us together! For myself, I have reason to say, (as you well know,) that never was attempt of the kind successful under greater improbabilities; and yet, so peculiar was our turn, that had we missed each other, perhaps there was not one of each sex in the kingdom that could have made us so entirely happy. Then, after marriage, it was not impossible for us, more than others, to decline into that satiety and indifference so much complained of, and so often observed. If we had sunk no lower than into a cold esteem, a sort of mechanical good-will, the world might have judged charitably that we were well matched; but we could not have been able to write, to speak, to look, and to feel, as we do now. But further, when all that we do possess was granted, we might still have been unhappy without the especial protection of God. We were liable to sickness, death, and a variety of distresses, which, if they had not impaired our love, would have made it productive of more pain than pleasure. But, in this respect, we have been no less distinguished than in the rest. I can give you no idea of the many evils and dangers which surrounded me in my last two voyages; nor can I recount how many fell beside me, and at my right hand, who had equal prospects, better constitutions, and perhaps superior skill. But this was not all, nor even half; for I found, upon my return, that my

dearest M*** was preserved to me, and had always the satisfaction to meet you in the most agreeable manner I could wish. And I have been conducted towards you thus far in safety the third time, and my hopes still flourish.

To the prime article, what we are to each other, many may be added, which, though subordinate, are very valuable. The union and harmony of every branch of our family; an easy, sufficient way of life, creditable and decent, if not splendid. But want of room prevents me from enlarging on these items, and from the mention of several more; for I am not willing to fill the sheet with what relates merely to this transitory state. The blessings I have recounted are, in themselves, great; but when compared with the views and hopes revealed to us by the Gospel, they sink at once in their importance, and become, any further than subservient to our spiritual interest, less than nothing, and vanity. All advantages of this kind might have been permitted us for the term of a frail life, and yet we might have lived and died strangers to God, and to true peace; nay, we certainly should, had we been left to ourselves.

Let us, therefore, praise the mercy and goodness of God, for conveying to us all his gifts in the channel of redeeming love; and for leading us to build our hopes upon the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by being made a curse for us, and dying upon the cross, has taken out that curse and evil which the transgression of our first parents had entailed upon the whole lower creation. Let us praise the Lord, that, though he has blessed us with so much of our heart's desire, he has enabled us to hope that he has not appointed us all our portion of good in this life. Let us rejoice, not merely in our comforts upon earth, but rather in the

trust we have that our names are written in heaven. Let us receive our Lord's gifts with thankfulness, and improve them to his service; and may they be doubly welcome to us, as tokens of his love, and earnests of his further gracious designs in our favour. And, oh! may the consciousness of our past neglect, and our unsuitable returns for all his benefits, inspire us with redoubled diligence and care for the future, and engage us in a humble and daily application to our great Surety, who has undertaken to pay *all* our debts. And may you, my dearest M***, appear to-morrow at his table with these views, acknowledging that our talents have been all of his bounty, and the abuse of them, yours and mine, and all that we can properly call our own. May your confessions end in peace, and your sorrow terminate in joy, in receiving the pledges of his dying love. You will remember me, and I shall endeavour to be with you in spirit; and I trust, on the next sacrament day, I shall accompany you in person; and before that time, I hope we shall be permitted, with one heart and one voice, to praise the Lord, our light, and strength, and salvation, who holds our souls in peace, and suffers not our feet to be moved. O Lord, thou hast dealt wonderfully with us; therefore will we exalt thy glorious name!

I am unalterably yours.

Liverpool, August 11.

My last just informed you of my arrival here in health and peace. I can tell you little more at present. I lived almost without sleep nearly a week before we came in, and my head and thoughts are not yet quite settled.

It is not at present determined, whether you or I

must remove from where we are; if you receive this without a postscript, you may expect me. I shall be clear of my ship African in two days. I have quitted her because she is such a heavy sailer. But there is another that was born (launched) the same day with her, which I may have if I please, and probably I shall not refuse her, though I know not what to do with her at present. My judgment tells me that it would be better to sail six months hence, and I have almost induced Mr. M**** to think as I do. And yet I fear he suspects that I start objections, that I may have the more time to pass with you. I wish he could know the peculiar turn of my love, and he would fully acquit me of such a charge. It is true, indeed, were I master of a small independency, though but a small one, I should glory in avowing, that nothing which the mercenary world calls advantage—not a large heap of yellow counters—should bribe me to the necessity of being so long and so far from my dearest M***. For when I consider myself only, I know and feel that the price of a kingdom would poorly pay me for your absence. But when I think of you as unprovided for, and liable to I know not what, if any thing should befall me; and still more, that your desire of making me happy was the occasion of your being in this precarious state; I almost grudge every hour in which I am not some way engaged for your interest. I should be ashamed to be long at home when your concerns require me abroad. However, I am to submit every thing to the disposal of that all-wise Providence on which I am permitted to depend, and by which I never was, nor can be, disappointed. I have many reasons for desiring a little time with you, if it will suit my business; if otherwise, I have one reason against it that outweighs them all—

the sense of what I owe to you. I considered, before we married, what must be the consequence on my side; I joyfully accepted the terms with all disadvantages; and I thank God, I never yet repented or thought, for a moment, that I could either bear, or forbear, too much, while you were my motive and reward.

If you ask how I pass my time here? I answer, that if an assemblage of all I can wish for could satisfy me, without your company, I need not set my foot out of Liverpool; yet if I did not keep a strict watch over my heart, I should be uneasy and impatient amidst all; and more so here than elsewhere, for every thing I see reminds me that you were with me last year.

Warrington, August 18.

I AM thus far on my return from Manchester, and thus far on my way from Liverpool to London, and hope to be with you on Friday. You must prepare for another journey, for I promised to return within a month. Mr. M****, in his usual manner, talks of having the ship at sea in six weeks; but I believe it will be near twelve before all is ready. I have procured for my new ship, the name of the Bee; both for shortness and significancy. I could comment a good while upon the word Bee, and talk about the sting and the honey; but I forbear, as we hope so soon to meet.

I make this a day of rest; for I think it not right to travel on a Sunday, without a more urgent necessity than I can plead at present. But it has been a cold, unfruitful day. It must be so at times, while I am en-

cumbered with the world and the flesh. But I am something enlivened by the receipt of yours of the fourteenth. Like Hezekiah, I spread the letter before the Lord. But my circumstances are very different from his: instead of complaining of enemies, my joyful errand to his mercy seat is to praise him for his goodness; for the confirmation of your health and peace, and for the happy prospect of being soon with you.

The last week I was at sea, was no less stormy with us than with you; and, besides the many invisible and unheeded evils from which we were preserved, we were twice in imminent, apparent danger; and never more so than for two or three hours before we arrived at Liverpool. Let these instances confirm you in the persuasion, that storms and calms are equally safe to those who trust in the God of the sea and the dry land. He sometimes gives me a view of impending harm, to teach me that I am insufficient to my own safety. But when deliverance is seasonable and necessary, I find it always at hand. Had the winds and weather, during the whole passage, been at my own choice, I could not have gained my port in a more satisfactory manner, or in a better hour than I did. I had the pleasure of returning thanks in all the churches, for an African voyage performed without any disaster, or the loss of a single man, (for Captain L**** was fixed in another vessel some time before his death.) This was much noticed, and spoken of, in the town; and I believe it is the first instance of the kind.

No part of your letter pleases me so much as that where you tell me you can sincerely say, *The will of the Lord be done.* To find us both proficients in this temper, would rejoice me more than the expectation of passing many winters at home; and yet I think I

should not undervalue a single hour of your company. But I consider that in a few winters and summers more, all our endeared hours will be as though they had never been; but the effects and consequences of our temporary connexion will abide for ever.

N. B. When I returned to Liverpool, and was upon the point of sailing in the Bee, it pleased God to stop me by illness. By the advice of the physicians, I resigned the command of the ship; and was thus unexpectedly freed from the disagreeable, and (as I now see it) the abominable employment and traffic in which I had been engaged. So that my marine correspondence ends here.

My first attack was a violent fit, which threatened immediate death, and left me no signs of life but breathing for about an hour. I soon grew better; but the sudden stroke made such an impression upon my dear wife, that it cost her more than a twelvemonth's severe illness. My friend, Mr. M****, procured me a place in the Custom-house; and when I was constrained to return to take possession of my office, she had been but a few days a little revived from a state in which the physicians had given up all hope of her recovery The second series of my letters were written while I was tide-surveyor of the port of Liverpool.

LETTERS TO A WIFE.

WRITTEN IN ENGLAND,

FROM 1755 TO 1785.

Thou dost but take the dying lamp away,
To bless me with thine own unclouded day.

MRS. ROWE.

Behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes, with a stroke; yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.—EZEK. xxiv. 16.

LETTERS TO A WIFE.

1755.

WHILE RESIDENT AT LIVERPOOL.

Towcester, August 12.

My Dearest,

Before this reaches you, your brother will have told you how easy and composed he left me. Indeed, I wonder at myself. But the Lord has been very gracious to me, and fulfils his promise of giving me strength according to my day. My mind is not distressed. My companions in the coach are civil and agreeable, in their way; but I had rather have been alone; for to commune with God and my own heart, would be much more pleasing than the empty amusing chit-chat I am engaged in at present.

I was enabled, this morning, to commend you to the Lord's blessing, with much comfort. And I have a cheerful hope that He will raise you up in due time; and that we shall again have a happy and thankful meeting. Till then, let us attend to *present* duty, and keep close to him by humble prayer, and a renewed dependence upon the blood of Jesus. Let us, while the rod is upon us, inquire into the meaning of it, and hear his voice by it: let us bow to his chastisement, and acknowledge that we have rebelled against

Him, and that he afflicts us far less than our iniquities have deserved. Then we may be assured, that though He cause grief, He will have compassion; and will not only deliver us, but give us to see, and to say, that it was good for us to have been in trouble. I esteem it a mercy that you found some mitigation of your pain, and some symptoms of amendment, before I left you. But had I been called away in the hour of your greatest extremity, I ought to have relied on the Lord's goodness, and to have been resigned to his will. But, alas! how weak is my faith!

I am in perfect health, and not uneasy for you. To be sure I think of you continually, but my trust in God bears me up. I shall endeavour to write by every post, but if one should pass me upon the road, I hope you will not be anxious. The Lord is my guard and my guide.

Litchfield, August 13.

Thus far I am brought in safety, and am not willing to trust the post any further, and therefore must be brief. I met Mr. T**** at Daventry, and requested him to send you word how cheerful he found me; fearing you would scarcely believe my own report, unless I had some one to vouch for me. I shall be glad to hear a like account of you, but I know who has the care of you, and what good ground I have to trust him. I hope my first news will be, that your recovery is advancing. Many prayers to this effect I have offered, and am every hour adding to the number, though not with the solemnity I could wish. For we have hitherto found so much company upon the road, and have come

in so late, that I have not had the opportunity of a single retired room. This is the only inconvenience I have met with. But I know I do not serve a hard master. I pray to Him who can hear the breathings of my thoughts, when in the midst of company, and who is more ready to hear than I am to ask.

I hope you, my dearest, will continue waiting for Him, for from Him only our help can come. Pray for a praying spirit; lay all your hopes and all your fears before Him. In this way, and in no other, peace and comfort will be surely found: I recommend you to his blessing, and remain, beyond expression,

Yours.

Liverpool, August 15.

I CANNOT write much to-night, but I must tell you, in a few words, all is well. I have met with the usual kind reception from our dear friends—have done my business at the Custom-House, and received many congratulations. I have a holiday till Monday, and shall then enter upon my office. As there are two surveyors, and I shall be upon the river only every other week, the place is likely to afford me leisure, which, in its turn, will be as welcome to me as money. Well: since the Lord has given me so many blessings, shall I not trust him throughout? Yes, I thank him, I hope I am warranted to say, I can, and do. My thoughts were much interrupted while in the coach; but I had a pleasant ride indeed from Warrington hither, and was led to wonder at my many mercies, and to resign both you and myself into the hands of God, with much satisfaction.

I have received your brother's letter, and I thank him for his punctuality. As the Lord is pleased to give you intervals of ease and sleep, so I know he can remove all your pains by a word; and I trust he will in the best season. May he, at present, sanctify his hand, to the increasing of our faith and patience. Amen!

Liverpool, August 20.

I HAVE received your sister's obliging letter, with your own dear name, in your own dear hand, at the bottom. A welcome sight! May I be thankful!

I entered upon business yesterday. I find my duty is to attend the tides one week, and to visit the ships that arrive, and such as are in the river; and the other week to inspect the vessels in the docks, and thus, alternately, the year round. The latter is little more than a sinecure, but the former requires pretty constant attendance, both by day and night. I have a good office, with fire and candle, fifty or sixty people under my direction, with a handsome six-oared boat and a coxswain, to row me about in form. Mr. W**** went with me on my first cruise down to the Rock. We saw a vessel, and wandered upon the hills, till she came in. I then went on board, and performed my office with all due gravity. And had it not been my business, the whole might have passed for a party of pleasure.

To-day the wind blows hard; but you need not be uneasy about me at such times. For though my department will lead me to be much upon the river, it is at my option to embark or not, as I find the weather. I like my station, and shall soon be master of it. Remember that I am in the path of duty, and under the protection of Him whom the winds and seas obey.

I perceive that you have thoughts of removing to Eltham. I pray the Lord to direct you when and where to go; and that his presence may be with you, to preserve you from being hurt by unsuitable company, so as to forget the vows you have offered in the time of your trouble. I hope our late trial will be sanctified to us, and that while we live we may have cause to say, that God is gracious and merciful even in afflicting us. If your health should be fully restored, let us remember it is but a reprieve. We must experience, sooner or later, another and a final visitation, to put an end to all our views which are bounded with the term of this frail life. Happy shall we be, if, when that hour arrives, we shall be found ready, and enabled by faith in our Redeemer, to withstand and overcome the shock of the last enemy, death. I hope and trust we are yet spared, that we may recover our strength before we go hence, and are no more seen. I hope, if the Lord is pleased to conduct you safely to me, and to give us a house of our own, we shall act, in some measure, suitable to our obligations, for so many deliverances and restorations as we have known; and learn to trust in his providence, and no more offend him by our unbelieving fears. I hope in a few more posts to have the pleasure of a letter of your own writing. But do not attempt it too soon. It is not necessary to make me easy. For I have been helped to trust you to the Lord's care, with few intervals of anxiety since I left you.

Liverpool, August 24.

THE good hand of God has brought me safely through a bustling, tempestuous week. I am to keep watch to-night till about two o'clock. But do not pity me. I shall be most of the time beside a good fire, reading, writing, and, at intervals, praying for you and myself. I hear you are still upon the recovery, for which I wish to be thankful. But, alas! how much am I otherwise! I seem almost to forget the bitter time we both have lately known, and to be nearly impatient to see you here. But do not think me uneasy; I assure you I am not. But I cannot help feeling that you are not with me. To-morrow my week of rest begins; then some of my friends may expect to hear from me. Of late I have only had leisure to write to you. Be cheerful and dependent. Make use of means prescribed for restoring your health, but do not rest in them. The blessing must be from the great Physician. To him let us apply for it; and ascribe to him all the praise, if we obtain relief.

Liverpool, August 26.

I HOPE I am not capable of undervaluing any of your former letters, but surely this now in my hand is the most pleasing and welcome one I ever received. May the Lord make me thankful that you are again able to hold a pen. Your brother repeatedly amused me with hopes of your recovery, when, as I now find, you were in the greatest pain and danger. There

is something so close and pertinent in the little you have written, that I am filled with joy. I have hardly known, you allow, till now, that you were enabled to pray. We may praise God for that pain or sickness, however severe, which teaches us in good earnest to call upon Him. You have been in trouble, you called upon him, and he has delivered you according to his word. What shall we render to Him for all his mercies! Alas, we are poor, and can render nothing of our own. But he will not despise the efforts of a thankful heart. I wish you well to Eltham. I fear the company there will not be quite suitable to the present state of your mind. But I trust you will keep a strict guard over yourself, and redouble your prayers to the God of all grace, to preserve you from evil. Secure seasons for retirement, and let not the world break in upon you, till you have daily committed and dedicated yourself to Him who has raised you from the borders of the grave.

Liverpool, September 2.

The strain of your letters now makes me think light of our temporary separation. Be not afraid, only believe. The Lord Jesus, whom you need and seek, invites you, and has declared, Whosoever cometh I will in no wise cast out. By nature, we all dislike his Gospel, and see no excellence in his person that we should desire him; if this is not your disposition at present, the change already wrought is his work; and He is not like the unwise, inconsiderate builder: what he begins, he is both able and willing to finish.

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BRUCE BRANCH

You have cause to lament the backwardness and hardness of your heart, (the Lord only knows how hard and backward mine is,) but let not this cast you down: He can take away the heart of stone. Nor think it strange if now, upon your setting your hand to the plough, the enemy should assault and trouble you. He will, if permitted, tempt you to suspect the reality of all that you have experienced; he will set your sins in order before you, and persuade you, if possible, to look into yourself for qualifications and conditions of acceptance. But answer him from the word of God, and tell him that he is a liar, and the father of it. Christ not only has mercy for the unworthy, the ungrateful, and perishing sinner, who cannot offer one plea (as from himself) why he should be spared; but it was purposely for those who answer to this character, that he came into the world to die, that He might save them to the uttermost. He gives qualifications indeed, but he requires none from us. Perhaps this enemy will quote Scripture against you, and press such texts upon your mind as might lead you to form hard conclusions against yourself. But you will bear this, if you consider that he had the impudence to assail our Lord himself in this manner, Matth. iv. This Jesus whom you seek, was in all points tempted and afflicted (sin excepted) like unto us. He has tasted suffering and anguish of mind, as well as death, for all his followers. Therefore He is a High Priest who can have compassion upon our infirmities, and is able to succour them that are tempted, and knows what temptations mean.

Go on, my dearest; I trust you are in the right way; wait patiently upon the Lord. Cast not away the confidence you express in his mercy, for in keeping it you

will find a great reward. Greater is He that is with us, than he that is in the world. Changes you must expect. The Christian life is a warfare; and though the Captain of our salvation, by conquering for us, has secured us the final victory, we may be sorely pinched, and sometimes wounded, while on the field of battle; but there is healing balm provided, and he will be always near to apply it. There may be fightings without and fears within; but He is faithful that has promised, who also will do it.

I have been so affected and engaged by the former part of your letter, that I have not time to answer the other particulars. It is my boarding week again, and the weather is bad. But fear not for me; I am in safe hands.

Liverpool, September 5.

On the stormy night you mention, I was safe in bed. I have been but once upon the river this week. The wind blew very hard then, it is true; but I was in no danger. I hope a little practice will teach you to trust me with equal ease, at all times, and in all places, where my duty calls me.

When you come hither, you will perhaps be more thankful for my being settled on shore, from what you will observe of the anxiety of those who have husbands, or parents, or children at sea, in the way of the approaching war. From such fears you will now be exempted; you will no more have to wait eight or ten months in suspense. When I think of my settlement here, and the manner of it, I see the appointment of Providence so good and gracious, and such a plain

answer to my poor prayers, that I cannot but wonder and adore. I think I have not yet told you that my immediate predecessor in office, Mr. C****, had not the least intention of resigning his place on the occasion of his father's death; though such a report was spread about the town, without his knowledge, or rather in defiance of all he could say to contradict it. Yet to this false report I owe my situation. For it put Mr. M**** upon an application to Mr. S****, the member for the town, and the very day he received the promise in my favour, Mr. C**** was found dead in his bed, though he had been in company, and in perfect health, the night before. If I mistake not, the same messenger who brought the promise, carried back the news of the vacancy to Mr. S****, at Chester. About an hour after, the mayor applied for a nephew of his; but though it was but an hour or two, he was too late. Mr. S**** had already written, and sent off the letter; and I was appointed accordingly. These circumstances appear to me extraordinary, though of a piece with many other parts of my singular history; and the more so, as, by another mistake, I missed the land-waiter's place, which was my first object, and which, I now see, would not have suited us nearly so well. I thank God I can now look through instruments and second causes, and see his wisdom and goodness immediately concerned in fixing my lot. He knows our wants and our infirmities. He knows what indulgences may, by his blessing, promote our real good, and excite us to praise his name; and what those are which might be snares and temptations to us, and prove hurtful. And He knows how to bestow the one, and to withhold the other. He does all things well!

Liverpool, September 7.

I WISH you well in the country, and in what part you best approve. To be sure, I should rejoice to see you; but I hope I shall not be impatient. However, when you are able, the sooner the better for your own sake, as bad roads and cold weather are approaching; and all the doctors here think that such an effectual change of air would strengthen you; but they have already mistaken your case. I wish you to come when you think you can travel as I mentioned, so as to hold out four or five hours, setting out late and putting up early; if you can thus advance only twenty miles in a day, it will bring you to me in time. But I only give my opinion; I leave you to your own prudence, or rather to the direction of Divine Providence, which, I trust, you will both seek and find, and to which I recommend you with an humble confidence. Many inquire after you, are pleased to hear of your amendment, and hope to see you soon. I say, Amen, at the Lord's best time. Till then, may he sanctify our separation, and enable us to trust his precious promises and tried faithfulness.

Liverpool, September 9.

I WILL not own, as you do, that I am indolent, but I am rather weary. I would be thankful for the account you give of your health, appetite, and colour. I hope your strength will return soon, and that I shall wait with cheerful patience till it does. When it shall please

God to bring us together again, I hope we shall strengthen each other's hands. Let us pray for this, while we are yet separated, that we may not be left any more to live to ourselves, but to Him, and may look upwards and forwards, to be prepared for the next trial; for sooner or later more will come.

The town is almost in mourning, because the players are gone. On their last night, the house was filled by four o'clock. Gayety and dissipation of all kinds increase daily here; when this spirit will stop, I know not. For myself, I live easy and retired, three or four hours every day, in my apartment, if business will permit. I need no diversions, and walking or reading are my only amusements, for I keep very little company; but my time is far from hanging upon my hands. I want nothing that this world can afford to amend my situation, but to have my dearest M*** with me, and for this, the Lord's time will be the best.

Liverpool, September 12.

I SHALL take care to write upon large paper, as you desire. But I believe the smaller may suffice for today. Most of my leisure this week will be taken up with Mr. Wh—d, which, as it is an occasional interruption, and from which I hope both for comfort and benefit, I think you will excuse. He came to town on Wednesday, preached on that evening, twice yesterday, and so will continue preaching twice a day while he stays. We shall try to keep him till Monday; though he says he never was in a place where he had so little encouragement to stay as here. I made myself known to him the first night; went to see him, and conversed

with him the next morning, when he invited me to supper. I went home with him from the preaching, and staid till ten o'clock. So we are now very great; and very thankful I would be for the privilege. May the Lord yet give him to see that his labour of love amongst us is not in vain. But surely this is the most unconcerned town, for its size, in the kingdom. I hope he is sent to awaken some of the people out of their false peace. However, he is, as he was formerly, very helpful to me. He warms my heart, makes me more indifferent to cares and crosses, and strengthens my faith. I find you are making acquaintance with Mr. M****. Well, go on; I hope you will leave London soon, or you will be thought as singular as your husband. To speak seriously, it makes my heart glad to see in you one mark of a real believer, in that you love the ministers and people of the Lord, and are not offended with the Gospel, which is a stumbling-block and rock of offence to many. May he carry on his work, and build you up in knowledge, faith, and much assurance. Amen. Think of me as always thinking of you, and praying for you.

Liverpool, September 16.

Mr. Wh—d left us yesterday morning; I accompanied him on foot a little way out of town, till the chaise overtook us. I have had more of his company than would have come to my share at London in a twelvemonth. I heard him preach nine times, supped with him three times, and dined with him once at Mr. F****'s, and on Sunday he dined with me. I cannot say how much I esteem him, and hope, to my dying

day, I shall have reason to bless God in his behalf. Having never been here before but one night, he was not known or regarded by the fashionable folks, though several of them went to hear him. But many of the poorer sort are inquiring after him with tears.

I commenced acquaintance yesterday with a good man, who lately lost his wife in child-bed the first year. He is the very picture of sorrow. I attempt to comfort him, though I succeed but poorly. It is only God who can give comfort in such a case. Yet I think few can be more capable of sympathizing with him than myself. What I have lately gone through is fresh upon my mind. And why was not the event the same to me? Every way I am distinguished. My prayers turn much upon the thoughts of our future settlement. It will require both prudence and resolution to set out right from the first; but, if we ask of God, it shall be given us. I would have you gradually prepare our sister for such a house as it will be our duty and privilege to keep; where God may be worshipped, and nothing practised or permitted that is contrary to our Christian profession.

Liverpool, September 19.

I FOLLOW you in my mind to Eltham, Bromly, &c.; though I know not the country. May the Lord be with you wherever you go, make known to you his covenant, and assure you of an unalienable interest in it.

I thank you for the account of Mr. B****'s sermon. You will observe, the principal effects or properties of Abraham's faith, by which he walked with God, were humility and integrity. He humbled himself before the Lord in secret, claiming no higher title than dust and

ashes. And he stood up boldly, as his avowed, devoted servant, before men. Let us imitate him. I little doubt but he was thought singular, and perhaps laughed at, and so probably shall we; but I trust grace will make us scorn proof, and not suffer us to be in the number of those who are ashamed of the Lord Jesus and his Gospel. No, I hope he will enable us to glory in the cross, and to endure the opposition we may meet with, as seeing *Him* who is invisible, who, when upon earth, submitted to be laughed to scorn himself, for us. He, having borne our reproach, has a just right to require that we should be ready and willing to bear reproach for him.

If the present fair weather continues, the road will be good to Warrington, where it will suit me rather better to meet you. But if you come by Chester, I can bring you by water in a pilot-boat very cleverly. Be sure that, for the sake of saving a little expense or time, you do not overact your strength. I could go on for an hour, in giving you foolish directions and precautions for your journey; but after all, it is best to leave you to the care of the Divine Providence, and to submit the method of your route to your own judgment.

Liverpool, September 28.

I CANNOT guess the reasons which, you say, taken together, will induce you to come by the stage. You may, perhaps, judge best, being upon the spot, and I would not overrule your inclinations. But as I know my own weakness, I am afraid it will be an uneasy journey, to me at least. As I have said before, I wish

to trust you into the Lord's hands; but when we have the choice of means, it is our duty to consult Providence. Ask the first friend you meet which is best adapted to your circumstances, as just recovering from illness; to travel from three in the morning till eight or nine at night, in a heavy coach, with mixed company; or from eight in the morning till five in the evening, in a chaise with your sister?

I pray the Lord to direct and strengthen you, and to give me a joyful sight of you again. My poor, weak heart sometimes rebels, and I almost complain because you are not yet able to come. But this humour seldom lasts a full minute, before my thoughts recur to the day when I left London, and that silences me at once. What a heap of guineas (had I possessed them) would I then have given, to be assured that you should, by this time, be so much restored as you are? Alas! I am still a sinful, inconsistent creature; but the Lord is merciful, beyond measure, to us both.

I go on making useful acquaintance. The Lord honours me in the eyes of his own people, which is the honour I most desire. And though some of the wags of my acquaintance have given me the name of young Wh—d, from my constant attendance upon him when he was here, it does not grieve me; and perhaps, if they would speak the truth, they do not think the worse of me in their hearts. I find I cannot be consistent and conscientious in my profession, without incurring the charge of singularity. I shall endeavour to act with prudence, and not give needless offence; but I hope I shall never more be ashamed of the Gospel.

Liverpool, September 26.

I THANK you for thanking me, for the bill I sent you. But do not suppose I give it you. I expect to be repaid—I recant—I own myself in debt, over head and ears (as they say) to you still. I must not talk of repayment till I am clear. But, I think, to do you real service, I could as readily part with my life. May the Lord unite us, still more closely, in his faith and fear!

When I first asked Mrs. D**** to hear Mr. Wh—d, she could hardly give me a civil answer, (though otherwise she is very obliging and respectful.) But curiosity, or a better motive, prevailing, she went on the second day. She returned very well disposed; and asked me if I had one of his printed sermons. I lent her a volume. She went to hear him again, and became his great admirer. She herself first proposed my asking him to dinner; and his behaviour there confirmed her in her respect for him. I invited four or five Christian friends to partake of his company. She provided a handsome dinner, and when I spoke of the additional expense, she said she was very willing to bear it; but I do not intend that she shall. She has borne the reproach and laugh of many of her neighbours very well. They call her a Methodist, and she seems as easy under the charge as I am. So, we see, very unlikely things may be brought about.

Liverpool, September 30.

I MUST transcribe part of a letter from Mr. W****. "I have several times had the pleasure of conversing with Mrs. N****. God has been pleased to give her a great measure of your spirit," (so he writes.) "She is neither afraid nor ashamed to own her profession. After a sermon of Mr. B****, on Psalm xxv. 14. she told me, that the hearing of the great physician had done her more good than all her other medicines." Thus far he. The Lord help you to go on and to increase! Now, methinks, I am happy indeed! Now my highest wishes are answered, if my dearest M*** is partaker of the same hope with myself. How pleasant will all the future comforts and blessings, which the Lord may be pleased to afford us, prove, if we can discern them conveyed to us in the channel of redeeming love! How pleasant will it be to look beyond them all, and, as the apostle speaks on another occasion, not to think that we have attained any thing as yet, comparatively speaking, even when we have all we can wish for, but still to press forward in our hopes and views, towards the prize of our high calling in a better world, where pleasure will be without abatement and without end.

Since you were so ready to believe me when I said I had not been well, pray why could you not take my word about my recovery? For shame, my dearest: these fears and distrustful thoughts passed with us once, but we must aim above them now. Let us have no more idolatry, if we value each other's peace, or are willing to avoid such fiery trials as we have lately known. However, whether you can believe me or not, I must

tell you again that I am in good health. The Lord be with you where you are, and in your journey when you move this way; and may we trust and serve him, according to what he has done for us!

Liverpool, October 3.

I AM not sorry that you complain of your heart; for, since our hearts will be bad, it is a mercy to be sensible that they are so. Nor will I contradict you when you say that you are ungrateful, and insensible to the Lord's goodness; only remember that you are so in common with others, and that there is not a person upon earth who knows himself, but must make the same complaint. I can find no words more suitable to my own case, than those which you make use of, only substituting your name for my own. "I delight, admire, and love to hang upon every sentence, and every action of my dearest M***; and yet how wanting, and how cold, am I to the gracious Author of all our mercies, to whom we owe each other, our happy affection, and all the satisfaction that flows from it." He might justly have parted us long ago for my ingratitude; He might have shut out my prayers in your late visitation; but He has raised you up to a new life Oh! that it may be so indeed!

I shall endeavour to temper my zeal with prudence. I am far from proposing that you shall keep company with washerwomen in this world. (Hereafter, I doubt not we shall be glad to join with such.) The religious acquaintance which I wish to cultivate with any degree of intimacy, will, I think, be confined to three or four families, all of whom are better to pass in the world

than ourselves; and who, though perhaps they do not aim in all things at the top of the polite taste, are sufficiently well-bred to be received as visitants any where, if their principles did not hinder. But this you may be assured of, that a consistent profession of real religion will carry the appearance of singularity in this town; and, unless you can confine yourself wholly to the gay and careless, and go all their lengths, you will certainly have a bit of the cross to carry, and must prepare yourself to be thought altered for the worse, by some of your acquaintance. I much more fear our being cowardly, than imprudent. But if we are of the number of those whom the Lord will not be ashamed to own in the great day, he will give us a measure of grace, that we shall not be ashamed to own his cause and people, in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation. But, as you say, there is *a way* of doing things, I shall try to carry it handsomely to others. It is not necessary to affront or quarrel with any who have treated us civilly; but experience will convince you, that the less we are connected with worldly people, the better. And as the Lord, by his providence, has placed us in a state of entire independence, and there is no consideration of trade or customers to prevent us from living, in all points, just as we please, I hope we shall judge better than to sacrifice our happiness and true interest to an empty sound.

But I perceive that you, likewise, have picked up a fine set of methodistical acquaintance. Should your aunt know it, she would set you down as almost ruined. But I, who love you better than a thousand aunts could do, congratulate you upon the acquisition. You may now see, by the examples before you, that true religion has nothing in it of the unsociable or gloomy;

but is, on the contrary, the source of peace, cheerfulness, and good humour. If, as you say, you love good people, He who has inclined your heart to love them here, will give you a portion with them both here and hereafter. Upon this single evidence, St. John grounds an assurance of heaven, saying, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." We may, indeed, love a good man upon other considerations; but to love him because he is good, becaue we think we see the image of our Saviour in him, and to love him most for the best parts of his character, is not possible till we have grace in our hearts; for, till then, we have an enmity to the Gospel. And though this is not always visible and active, in persons of mild and gentle dispositions, the farthest such can go is to say, I love the man because he is of a good life and behaviour, but he has some strange, unaccountable whims and prejudices.

Liverpool, October 5.

I BELIEVE you do not guess how I am disappointed, when I receive only half a side from you. Indeed, if writing is convenient to you, I could be content with half a line; but your excuse seems to suppose you are afraid of wearying me; for you say, "I shorten this merely because my last was so long." Well, I hope a few more posts will bring us together; in the mean time, let me have as much of you as you can conveniently commit to paper. I fear lest, by the pressing manner of my writing, you should sometimes think I wrong you by a suspicion that you will stay a day longer than needful. But, indeed, it is my happiness to

believe that your heart is as much here as mine is at London. I cannot make you a more expensive compliment. But, alas! whither am I running? I forget my own duty and yours. I fear it is of the number of our great sins, that our hearts cleave so close to each other, and so little to the Lord; that we are so thoughtful about the future, and so negligent of the present. It is, at least, thus with me. I still feel that you are my idol, and though the Lord has lately afflicted you for my sake, and is now raising you up for me again, as it were from the grave, I am not yet instructed.

Liverpool, October 7.

I CANNOT express what I felt to-day while I was reading your dear letter, which informs me that you hope to set out next week; but you can guess for me. Ten thousand thoughts crowd upon me at once. The remembrance of that mournful, painful week at London, when I could only behold and share, and, by sharing, increase your distress, without procuring you the least help or ease, (which I hope I shall never forget while I can remember any thing,)—the situation in which we parted, when the Lord enabled me to hope against hope—the joy to think you now recovered from a most dangerous illness—the expectation of seeing you in a few days, and the former experience I have had, of what a happy meeting with you includes—all these different emotions of joy and sorrow, of love and gratitude, took possession of my soul at once. And is it so indeed? Shall I receive you soon as restored from the grave, and have all my pleasures heightened by the contrast of my late trials? Oh! then what shall I ren-

der to the Lord for all his goodness? Could money or friends have helped us, you would have been relieved sooner: but there was no power in heaven or earth, that could restore ease to you or peace to me, but God alone. To him, therefore, be the glory and the praise; all the glory and all the praise! And let us aim to declare his goodness, not merely in secret, or to each other, but in the whole course of our lives, by choosing what is pleasing to him, and avoiding what he hates. And especially, let us watch and pray against setting up our rest here below, and misplacing that regard upon each other, which is due only to him. May we be enabled to commit our dearest concerns, and have recourse in every trouble, to Him who has so often heard our prayers, and done us good. And, oh! that we may have that moderation, both in affection and practice, towards earthly things, which becomes those who profess themselves strangers and sojourners here, and who look for a better inheritance, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Surely it was our own folly that brought our late distress upon us. We had lived too much to ourselves, and had not glorified, as we ought, the God in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways.

When Hezekiah was sick, nigh unto death, the Lord raised him up, and prolonged his life fifteen years. But we are told that he rendered not according to the benefit he had received, 2 Chron. xxxii. Alas! how strongly does this charge lie against us! How often have we been restored to each other, after long and dangerous separations! How wonderfully have we been preserved from innumerable evils, to which, in such a world as this, we are hourly exposed! And yet it has now pleased God to give us a prospect of passing our days

together comfortably, and free from many inconveniences which formerly affected us. But to keep us from growing too secure, just at the time He did this, He laid his hand upon you, and by one stroke brought us both down to the ground. Now again, He is returning in mercy, bringing us health, peace, and joy. Let us bear the rod, and him who hath appointed it. For if we come together yet again in a thoughtless, ungrateful, self-seeking temper, he can again separate us, in a way that we are not aware of. But, I hope and pray we shall be enabled to serve him from gratitude, and from a consideration of the great things He has done for us, rather than from a principle of slavish fear.

If you are really afraid of being a hypocrite, it is a good sign that you are not one. For the hypocrite is secure and confident, and has no suspicion of a mistake. But the best persons upon earth must own, that though, through grace, they are not hypocrites, there is too much hypocrisy remaining in them. Their real and fundamental aim is the glory of God; but wretched, sinful self-will creeps in, and taints their best performances. However, our comfort is, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. What a great word is that little word All! not only from sins of one kind, or of one degree, but of all kinds, and of all degrees, when we apply to it in a truly humble and repenting spirit.

I was not angry with you for doubting of my health, (how do you think I can be angry with you at all?) I only meant to caution you against an overweening, distrustful care, which answers no good end, but is a species of sinful unbelief. And I foresee that against my judgment and experience, and notwithstanding all my grave admonitions to you, I shall too often offend

in the same way, and you will have frequent occasions of giving me the same advice. But this is a part of our duty, and our privilege, to exhort and admonish each other, lest we should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

I was last night with Mr. and Mrs. ***. I think you will like their acquaintance. They are sober, sensible people, and seem very happy in each other. What a pity that the one thing needful should be wanting, when nothing else seems to be wanting! But so it was with us once; and it may be better with them hereafter.

1757.

My Dearest M****, *Liverpool, February 2.*

I would not give you occasion to think that the return of your birth-day is less interesting to me at present, than it was seven years ago; or that my concern in it gives me less pleasure, now I am with you in Liverpool, than when I was exiled from you on the coast of Africa. It is a part of my happiness, and demands my daily acknowledgment and praise to God, that my regard for you is no more capable of being weakened by time, than heretofore by absence. You will not expect me to address you in the strain of modern politeness, but I am persuaded that you will favourably accept what I may write, because you will approve my motive and my sincerity.

I often wonder at the ill-timed festivity and gayety with which the return of a birth-day is usually observed. Multitudes, who with respect to the past, can find little to make them reflect with pleasure on their having been

brought into the world, and, with respect to the future, tremble in the midst of all their parade at the serious apprehension of death, yet agree to drown both the past and the future in noise and dissipation. For my own part, I see sufficient reason to make my birth-day, more especially, a season of serious reflection. And I recommend the practice to you. For what is the language of a birth-day? Has it not a warning voice, to remind us that another year of our time and opportunities is closed upon us, (time and talents for which we are accountable, and seasons which cannot be recalled,) and that death and eternity have advanced nearer to us by the stride of a whole year? And, therefore, I judge that a birth-day is a very improper day for mortals to be frolicksome. To those whose hearts are deeply engaged in the things of this world, I should imagine the very thought of the occasion would be (like the hand-writing on the wall to Belshazzar, Dan. v.) sufficient to put a full stop to their feast, and to turn their joy to heaviness. But such is our depravity, that, till grace touches the heart, the most obvious and most interesting truths can make no proper impression upon us. But I seem to forget that I am writing to you.

I am no enemy to joy: and I am sure the real Christian, who has peace with God and in his own conscience, has both the best title to joy, and the best disposition for it. I invite you to rejoice; but let it be in the right way, and in the right manner. "Rejoice in the Lord;" and "Rejoice with trembling." Let us learn from the first, the sure grounds we have for rejoicing; and from the second, the many considerations which should correct and qualify our joy, that it may not deviate into a wrong channel, and become sinful and dangerous.

I say, Rejoice in the Lord. I congratulate you on

your birth-day; not to give you a vain complacence in yourself, but to lead you back to the time and circumstances of your birth, that you may reflect on the goodness of God. You were born of creditable and affectionate parents, in easy circumstances, with a body neither diseased nor deformed, and a mind endued with rational faculties, with a soul formed for immortality, capable of loving and serving God here, and being happy with him for ever. Your lot was cast in a land favoured with the Gospel, without which all temporal blessings would have been of little worth; but if you take them together, and compare your own state with that of millions of your fellow-creatures, what great reasons have you to rejoice in this first view? But I would lead your thoughts forward from thence, step by step, through every succeeding year, to this day; through infancy, childhood, and especially youth, that dangerous period, in which such numbers make shipwreck of their hopes and prospects. Must you not say, "Surely mercy and goodness have followed me all the days of my life?" What sorrows, what sicknesses, what snares, have you either been exempted from, or preserved safely through? How many, within the circle of your own acquaintance, have been cut short before they reached your term of life? How many, who are yet living, are suffering from evils to which you are equally exposed? I make no scruple to number our happy marriage among the blessings for which you see cause to be thankful; that it pleased God to bring us together, to bless us with a true affection, to restore us to each other after long separations, to recover us from long sicknesses, to fix us in our present situation, and, above all, to direct our hopes beyond the present world for our chief happiness. This is the crowning mercy. If

the Lord has shown you and me those things which are hidden from many of the wise and prudent; if we know our disease and our remedy, that we are sinners, helpless and hopeless in ourselves, but sinners for whom a sure and free salvation is provided in Jesus Christ, and that we have ground to hope that we are interested in the pardons and promises of the Gospel; that the hairs of our head are numbered, and that all things are working for our good; that God will be our sun and shield here, and our portion for ever; if these things are so, we may well rejoice, but still it must be in the Lord; for all our good, present and hoped for, is from him alone.

But I say, secondly, Rejoice with trembling. Our joy in this world cannot be unmixed. There are unavoidables which, though they cannot take it from us, will and ought to temper it; such as these—An ingenuous sense of our unsuitable returns for so many and great mercies. May God preserve us from that terror of mind on account of sin, which, sooner or later, will be the portion of those who know him not! We need not be distressed; for though we have sinned, Christ has died for sinners, and is able to save to the uttermost. Yet, certainly, we have much cause to grieve and be ashamed, that we have lived so long to so little purpose, that we have received so much and rendered so little, and that after all our experience and resolutions, we are still so inactive and unstable in his service. The snares, temptations, and enemies around us, may make us thoughtful, if they do not make us tremble. These would surely prevail against us at last, were not the Lord on our side. We may almost tremble likewise, for the sins of those among whom we live. Lot chose to reside in Sodom, because it was a plea-

sant country, and well watered; but the sins of the inhabitants soon made him forget the advantages of the place. His righteous soul was vexed, from day to day, by their ungodly deeds. And so shall we feel, if we have a due regard for the glory of God, the love of Christ, and the souls of our neighbours. We have likewise cause to tremble, when we think of the judgments that seem at present hanging over a sinful, insensible nation. We have just reason to fear lest mercy, so long despised, should be withdrawn. Let us, like good Eli, tremble for the ark of God. And in this view we may tremble for ourselves, for we have contributed our part to the filling up of the measure of national iniquity. We have neither borne that testimony against sin in public, nor mourned for it in secret, as we ought. And though, I trust, it shall be well with us at last, who can tell what scenes of distress and difficulty we may be appointed to struggle through, while we are upon earth? And therefore we should tremble, while we rejoice.

I could enlarge my homily, would time and paper permit. In brief, you have, to my comfort, been spared to finish another year. The event of the next is uncertain. I would therefore exhort you and myself, to live this year as though it would, as though it certainly were to be, our last. It may possibly prove so. Let us renew our application to the throne of grace, and the blood of sprinkling. Let us pray that we may be always ready, that our hearts may be withdrawn from worldly things, and be fixed, trusting in the Lord. And then, come life, come death, let peace be continued, or troubles be multiplied, nothing shall be able greatly to move us.

1758.

Warrington, December 18.

My Dearest,

Thus far it is well, and, I trust, shall be to the end. The weather is fine, the roads good, the horse free and easy. He has not started once; though he sometimes raises his ears.

Now and then I feel some twinges at being forced from you, though but for a season; but the cause makes amends. Three or four weeks will, I hope, re-unite us, and then, one hour will repay the pains of absence. Let us not wish away the interval, but make the most of it, for it will soon be over. The new scene of life which appears to be opening before us, is very important. We have need to pray earnestly, constantly, for each other, and for ourselves. Make much of the means of grace, reserve seasons for retirement. Endeavour to avoid the company by which you cannot improve, and to improve by that which you cannot avoid. Adieu. May the peace of God here, prepare you for his glory hereafter. Amen!

Hunslett, December 15.

I have received my title from Mr. C***, and shall proceed to-morrow. I can hardly be more happy, while separated from you, than at present. Dear Mrs. A***, who is well, is sitting by me on her husband's knee, while poor I am like a turtle without my mate. But I trust my time will come again. Till then I can think,

write, and pray; I can repeat your name a thousand times; and therefore I look at them now with a pleasure unmixed with envy. But I must not trifle. I expect soon to assume a character which ought, if possible, to wean me from every thought that terminates in self or time. Pray for me, my dearest; my hour of trial is at hand; a solemn hour, which will call for all my faith, strength, and zeal. But the needful supply is near. In our Lord there is a fulness of grace, a sufficiency for me, for you, and for all that seek. May he give you that peace that passeth all understanding, may he bless us while apart, and join us again to our mutual comfort, here for a time, and hereafter for ever!

London, December 21.

WELL!—All is over for the present, and I have only cheated you out of a journey to London. Last night I waited on the Bishop of Chester. He received me with great civility; but he said, as the title was out of his diocese, he could do me no effectual service, and that the notice was much too short. However, he countersigned my testimonials, and directed me to Dr. N***, the Archbishop's chaplain. On him I waited this morning. He referred me to the Secretary. and from him I received the softest refusal imaginable. He had represented my affair to the Archbishop, but his Grace was inflexible in supporting the rules and canons of the church, &c.

Had my eye been raised no higher than to his Grace of York, I should have been displeased and disconcerted; but I am in the hands of the great Lord of all.

He has been pleased to prove me, whether my surrender to his will was sincere or not; and he has enabled me to stand the trial. As sure as our names are John and Mary, you will find that the time and expense of this journey will not be thrown away. I am quite satisfied and easy. The Lord will make all these things subservient to our good. He can open another door in a minute. I think to go down to Chatham on Monday, and to set out for Leeds about Thursday. It may be the second week in January before I reach home, though I long to see you, with all the eagerness of a lover. Take care of your health, especially the health of your soul.

Chatham, December 25.

I CAME hither, with your brother, on Saturday. Our family are all well, and well pleased with my design; only some of them express a little of their cares and fears about money matters. Mamma had a pleasing prospect that I should be curate to Mr. S***, that you might be near her again. But this prospect lasted only half an hour, for, upon inquiry, I found he was provided. I hear Mr. Hervey is dying, so that I cannot see him in this world. You may trust me to make the best of my way home I seem already to have been from you the term of an African voyage; and still find, as heretofore, that nothing can make amends for the want of company. Though the Lord permits difficulties and hindrances to arise for the trial of our faith and patience, I cannot believe that he either disapproves, or will finally disappoint, my desire to serve

him. I surrendered myself to his disposal without reserve, and I cannot wonder, nor ought I to complain, if he takes me at my word, and puts my sincerity to the proof. Mr. B*** is pleased with the disinterestedness I have been enabled to show, and says he is persuaded we shall be no losers. He doubts not but the Lord will give us more than He will call us to part with. Be this as it may, as to dirty money; if He gives us grace and peace; if He continues our affection, and preserves us to each other; if He is pleased to be with us in every trouble and exigence; if he affords us a clear evidence of our interest in a heavenly inheritance; if he favours us with a calm, believing acquiescence in his will; if he honours us with usefulness in this life, and crowns us with glory in a better—we shall surely have no cause for complaint. If once we reach heaven, we shall not think that we did, or suffered, too much for Him who loved us, and gave himself for us. One glance of that happiness which endures for ever, will abundantly overpay us for all the cares and fears we experienced during our pilgrimage.

I cannot express the satisfaction your dear letter gave me, in finding you so easy and resigned, upon the event of my late attempt. This is a mercy I would, if necessary, or possible, or lawful, have purchased at the price of a limb. Nothing disquieted me from the first of my design, but the fear of involving you in difficulties, or causing you uneasiness. But in this, as in a thousand instances, I have found the Lord a hearer of prayer. And I hope, and believe, he has a blessing in store for you upon this account. You know me too well to suspect me of flattery; I give you my plain advice, when I think it needful. It is a proof of my affec-

tion. But neither ought I to withhold deserved praise. You have, from the first rise of this affair, acted a part which perhaps few of your sex could equal. To make such sacrifices so cheerfully, and upon such slender grounds, is not common. I can only say, it has not been lost upon me. My primary thanks, indeed, are due to the Lord, who gave you to me, and who gave you every qualification that could engage my heart, and gratify my utmost wishes in a wife. My next are due to you. The whole term of our union forms a series of many a proof of recollected love, as Thomson speaks. But nothing has more strongly enhanced my love and gratitude to you than your conduct when we were last at Leeds, and ever since. Take courage, hold on, the end will answer your expectations. I can say nothing as to particulars; but, in general, I am sure that none who put their trust in God shall be finally ashamed. I suppose you have your fits of fear and unbelief. I have likewise severely felt them at times. But mind them not; or turn them to advantage, by making them occasions of more frequent and earnest prayer. For it is written "Call upon me in trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Let us be diligent in the means of grace; these are the paths in which the Lord has commanded us to walk, and where he has promised to meet us, and bless us. The enemy would fain keep us from them, or make them burdensome; and he has too often prevailed. Should not experience make us wise? Has it not always been best with us when we have been most diligent in prayer, most attentive to the Scriptures, and most disengaged from the world and from trifling company? Have we not found a vanity in every thing but religion, especially when trouble has stared us in the face, or when pain

or sickness have taken hold of us? Why, then, should we be fooled and deceived any more? Let us return to the Lord; there is forgiveness with him for the past, supplies suited to every need. None that come to him shall be cast out; none that rest on him shall be overthrown; none that love and serve him shall be unrewarded.

1759.

Loughborough, January 5.

I HOPE this will come in time, either to prevent or relieve your uneasiness on my account. Whatever you have suffered, or may suffer, for me, you shall be made amends, so far as gratitude will pass for payment, and so far as the study of my life can promote your satisfaction. If you have had fears for me, they were needless. And I hope you will in time learn to trust me, and all your concerns, to God, who careth for us. I left London on Saturday about ten, but soon found I had a very indifferent horse. I have been obliged to travel his pace, for he positively refuses to travel mine; and though I tell him how impatient I am to see my dear M***, he will not move one foot the faster. When I came to Barnet, I demurred about the road; at length I turned to the right, not knowing when I might have so good an opportunity of seeing the persons I mentioned in my last.

I put up at Welling, sent a note to Dr. Young, and received for answer, that he would be glad to see me. I spent an hour with him. His conversation was agreeable, and much answerable to what I expected from the author of the Night Thoughts. He seemed like-

wise pleased with me. It would have surprised you to hear how I let my tongue run before this great man. He approved my design of entering the ministry, and said many encouraging things upon the subject; and, when he dismissed me, desired that I would never pass near his house without calling upon him.

I spent Sunday at Everton, and am glad I went, though it will cost me two days more absence from you. The first five miles from thence into the York road, were, I think, the worst I had ever rid or seen. I was sometimes in fear for myself, but more frequently for my poor horse, lest I must have left him sticking in the clay, as a memorandum of my having passed that way. When I put up at night, I found that I had come about six miles beyond the place where I should have turned off. It was a poor day's journey, but eighteen miles in all, and six of them out of the way. On Tuesday I was advised to keep on sixteen miles further, and I should find a turnpike road to Leicester. If I had missed this turning likewise, I should have missed some trouble and trepidation. I had thirty-three miles cross road to go, and found much of it a cross road indeed. Though the worst pieces of it, if taken together, were not above ten miles, I would rather go a hundred miles round, than travel it again. I am still a hundred miles from you, but I have no more kind friends, nor cross roads, to detain me. Thank the Lord for preserving me in health and safety. My horse is recovered from his fright, and seems in better order than when I left London. I am likely to jog on by myself; for if any persons were going my way, they would hardly have patience to wait my horse's motions, nor would he mend his pace to please any body. But I trust I am not alone, nor do I often feel a want of any company

but yours. Continue to pray for me. I trust we shall live to see the hand of God over-ruling every thing for our benefit; and that every separation, inconvenience, or expense, occasioned by a desire of promoting his glory, shall be well made up to us in the best time.

Hunslett, May 17.

I CANNOT tell you how often your dear name has been in my mouth since I left you, nor how earnestly and frequently I commend you to the Lord's blessing. May he teach us to improve these short, occasional separations. When I am absent from you, I most sensibly feel how dear you are to me; and what a heavy trial I should have, if God was to take you wholly from me. I ought to believe that He will enable me to bear whatever he may appoint, because such is his promise; but at present it seems that a blow so near to my heart would be long and deeply felt, in every other circumstance of life, and that I should find pleasure in nothing but in bemoaning my loss. I doubt not but you have similar thoughts, upon the supposition of my being removed. May we therefore learn, in the first place, to be thankful that we have been so often restored, and so long preserved, to each other; and, that our affection is still maintained inviolable and increasing; and, secondly, to be watchful and cautious, that we do not, by our idolatry or ingratitude, render it necessary for the Lord, even in mercy, to wound us in the most sensible part, and to punish either of us in the person of the other.

1760.

London, July 4.

You did not bid me write, because, I suppose, you hardly thought I could refrain, for so many tedious days, from giving my mind a little vent. How often have I told you, that whatever pleasure or amusement I may find in the company of friends, yet there is a peculiar something, that shares in, and gives an inexpressible cast to, every motion of my mind, when you are absent? A man deprived of his right hand, may go about his business with the same spirit and alacrity as in time past; yet every thing he undertakes will necessarily remind and convince him of his loss. This, or something like it, I may have hinted a thousand times; but as I write and speak from my heart, the thought occurs as readily to me as at the first, and I cannot easily avoid repeating it. I am afraid of idolatry; I am afraid we have been, and still are, too guilty of the charge; and the Lord, to whom alone we belong, and to whom all our services and affections are primarily due, might justly, very justly, blast our boasted paradise. Yet we owe it to him that our souls are susceptive of tender and generous feelings. He formed us for each other, and his good providence brought us together. It is no wonder, if so many years, so many endearments, so many obligations, have produced an uncommon effect; and that, by long habit, it is become almost impossible for me to draw a breath in which you are not concerned. If this mutual affection leads us to the Fountain from whence our blessings flow, and if we

can regard each other, and every thing about us, with a reference to that eternity to which we are hasting, then are we happy indeed. Then not even death (the dread of mortals, especially of those who live in the possession of their wishes) can greatly harm us. Death itself can only part us for a little pace, as the pier of a bridge divides the stream for a few moments, but cannot make a real separation. The friendly waters soon mix again, and, with one force and consent, press forward to the ocean.

Were it not for the support of believing that there is a brighter and a longer day beyond the grave, I should sink down in despair, and starve, if I may use a vulgar saying, in the midst of plenty. For though I have known too much, not to smile at the cold disciples (if there are any such) of Platonic love; yet, methinks, a regard like ours is designed to flourish in a better world than this, and can never appear displayed to its full extent and advantage, until transplanted into those regions of light and joy, where all that is imperfect and transient shall be no more known. Here, then, is the true plan of happiness for us; to consider that God, who made us, made us immortals; and appointed us to spend so many years in the most interesting connexion, not only to sweeten the cares of life, and to render our path through this wilderness more easy, but chiefly that we might be helpful in animating each other, in our progress to that kingdom and crown which is incorruptible and undefiled; a kingdom to which we are called by Him who died once, to give us right, and now lives for ever, to give us entrance.

Liverpool, August 6.

It is almost noon, and no letter. I begin to fear I shall not have one by this post; and I know not the time when a letter from you would have been more welcome, or more necessary. I can but poorly bear your absence at any time, but I seem to need you now more than ever. I feel much suspense and anxiety about our late proposed movements; and I have no one to whom I can unbosom myself; or, if I had a thousand friends, they would signify little without you. I am ashamed and grieved to think how irksome I find it to be here alone.

Now I am well again: a great rap at the door, and a letter from somebody, has quite cured me. But as a few days of my leave of absence are yet unexpired, and the collector (to whom I told a sad story, what a poor disconsolate thing I am,) has added six more to them, I think to take a journey into Yorkshire, and to meet you in good time at Manchester. I am told the coach performs in two days, which I am afraid will be fatigueing to you; but if I get hold of you again, you shall not want for good nursing.

I am glad you ventured to London by water; for I wish you to strive against, and conquer, vain fears. The only way of doing this effectually, is by placing our hopes and fears where alone they are due. Let us pray for grace to fear the Lord, and his goodness, and then we need not be afraid though the earth be moved, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea. Many a prayer I have put up for you since I saw you. I hope the Lord will answer us for ourselves and each

other. I hope you will not be wanting to pray for yourself. Prayer is the great secret which gives the true relish to life. When I can pray with some liberty, I find all goes on well; when I cannot, I have no real pleasure in any thing. I believe I should not have begun my letter in so complaining a strain, if I was not much out of frame for prayer. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you, is a maxim that we ought always to regard. To-morrow I set off for Yorkshire. But how gladly would I give up the pleasure of visiting my friends there, to fly by the shortest road to you, that I might tell you by word of mouth, if I was able, how much I am

Yours, &c.

1762.

Liverpool, Jun 14.

You will, perhaps, wonder that I choose the formality of writing, when we have so many happy opportunities of exchanging hearts by discourse. But in this way I can collect my thoughts, and present them to you in one view. And you can likewise peruse and reconsider them at your leisure. Therefore, without further apology or preamble, I proceed to the point.

Though it is not necessary, it always gives me pleasure, to repeat how truly I love you, how much my happiness depends upon you, and that I never taste pleasure more sincerely myself, than when I am instrumental to the promoting of yours. And that, on the contrary, I account it among my most painful trials if, either through inadvertence or necessity, I occasion

you any uneasiness. I assume no merit from being able to say this. It amounts to no more than that I know when I am well. Besides, it is a just debt, in which I stand bound for the innumerable obligations your affection daily increases upon me. I should be blind not to perceive, and ungrateful if I did not acknowledge, that you are not behind-hand with me in your inclination; and, from the turn of our circumstances, you have had fairer opportunities of showing what sacrifices you can make for my repose, especially within these last three years.

And still, it seems, the advantage is, and will be, on your side. I am still striving to decline the thoughts of an undertaking which, though otherwise I should think agreeable, has this momentous difficulty attending it, that it has not your full concurrence and approbation. If I thought myself in the path of duty, and had you on my side, methinks all trials would be comparatively light; but when duty seems to call one way, and my regard for your peace seems to plead powerfully for another, how can I but be greatly perplexed?

Not but that I am well assured, if I told you I was at such a pinch that I could see no medium between grieving you and acting against the light of my own mind, you would comply with any proposal I could make; and would rather suffer in silence, than see me at continual variance with myself. But such a consent would not satisfy me. The more you constrained yourself for me, so much the more should I be pained for you; and thus, by our sensibility, we should give each other greater trouble, in proportion as we endeavoured to avoid it.

I hope, therefore, that I write this in a happy hour, and that the Lord, who has power over all hearts (to

whom we owe our all, and especially our mutual love) will accompany it with his blessing, that I may not merely extort your consent, but obtain your full concurrence and approbation to my design. I much desire to enlarge my little attempts in the way of preaching, or expounding (call it what you please) in Liverpool. The wish of many here, the advice of many absent, and my own judgment (I had almost said my conscience) are united on one side; which I think would preponderate against Mr. B***'s single sentiment, if your fears did not add weight to his scale.

The late death of Mr. Jones, of St. Saviour's, has pressed this concern more closely upon my mind. I fear it must be wrong, after having so solemnly devoted myself to the Lord for his service, to wear away my time and bury my talents in silence (because I have been refused orders in the church) after all the great things that he has done for me. And should He throw me upon a sick bed, or visit you for my sake, I believe the sense of my cowardice and indolence, in this business, would greatly aggravate my distress.

I think there are but two possible objections against my purpose. The first is, that I should probably draw upon myself some of that scorn or opposition which, in a greater or less degree, is the usual portion of those who determine to be faithful. But even if this was a weighty something, though indeed it is quite light when compared with the blessings promised to those who suffer for the truth, it is some encouragement to find, that after it has been publicly known, for more than a twelvemonth, that several of my friends frequent my house on a Sunday evening, I have not had the least disturbance near home, nor been treated with the least disrespect or ridicule abroad, upon that account. And

if I procured a larger place to speak in, I might still go on as quietly. However, I am willing to venture.

The other objection, being started by prudence, ought to be attended to. But I think that if I chose such times only as would not interfere with my business, I should run no hazard of losing my place. And this is the opinion of my immediate superiors in office, whom I have consulted upon the point. Nay, I know not but the diminutions I have found in my emoluments may be owing to my hesitation. If I serve the Lord heartily, he will be answerable for consequences; but if I continue to serve him by halves, and to rebel against the conviction of my mind, will it be any wonder that when I look for much, it should come to little?

You know that I am not wholly incompetent, either as to knowledge or expression. Shall I flatter your regard for me by hinting, that perhaps a step of this kind may, in a little time, gain me more respect and estimation than I have yet known? But, I hope, we both wish to be governed by a nobler motive. It will be of little moment what the people of the world once thought of me, when they and we shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ!

You justly complain of dull Sabbaths. Let us then embrace the first favourable opportunity of aiming at what may more enliven them. You love to hear me speak, upon all occasions. And I think you have sometimes heard me with pleasure as a preacher. And you know not what blessings may be yet reserved for you. Perhaps the Lord may send you the greatest favours by the hand of him, from whom you are kind enough to accept the smallest trifle with complacence.

After all, as I have already said, I cannot be content with forcing your bare acquiescence. I beg, therefore,

you will think it over frequently, and entreat the Lord to direct us both. Perhaps, before long, it may seem to deserve your approbation. To hear you say so, would make me quite another person. For, while I remain in this suspense, I feel, at times, a burden which I can hardly bear, and cannot possibly shake off.*

May the Lord bless, guide, and guard you, and

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*The influence of my judicious and affectionate counsellor moderated the zeal which dictated the preceding letter, and kept me quiet, till the Lord's time came when I should have the desire of my heart. Had it not been for her, I should, perhaps, have precluded myself from those important scenes of service to which he was pleased to appoint me. But the exercises of my mind upon this head, I believe, have not been peculiar to myself. I have known several persons, sensible, pious, of competent abilities, cordially attached to the established church, who, being wearied out by repeated refusals of ordination, and, perhaps, not having the advantage of such an adviser as I had, have at length struck into the itinerant path, or settled among the dissenters. Some of these, yet living, are men of respectable characters, and useful in their ministry. But their influence, which would once have been serviceable to the true interests of the church of England, now rather operates against it. I was long in a trying situation, thinking myself bound in conscience, upon grounds which, I believe, would have stood the test of candid examination, could I have obtained a hearing; and yet refused admission, by two archbishops and one bishop, into that line of service which had my decided preference. This was one of the reasons I have to praise God for the partner He mercifully allotted me. She was useful to me through life, but perhaps in no one instance more essentially so, than in the prudent use she made of my affection to her, and of hers to me, at this period. I believe no arguments but hers could have restrained me for almost two years, from taking a rash step, of which I should, perhaps, have soon repented, and which would have led me far wide of the honour and comfort I have since been favoured with. The Lord's time is like the time of tide, which no human power can either accelerate or retard. Though it tarry, wait for it.

abundantly reward you for all your affection and kindnesss to

Yours, &c.

1764.

London, April 5.

Your poor husband has need of your prayers, that he may not forget himself amidst the many caresses he meets with. I hope I shall not, but my heart is deceitful and desperately wicked; and I can already see how prosperity blinds and hurts even persons of good sense and much experience. I cannot but be pleased to find so many gracious people in the higher scale of life. But I hope I could take as much pleasure in conversing with the poor of the flock. I think I could be happy at Olney, if the Lord made me useful to the people there, though neither they nor I should be spoken of beyond the bounds of the parish. I am glad you are pleased with the prospect; for no earthly consideration can animate me so much, as to have our hearts and desires united in this point, as they are in every thing else. What a blessing do I possess in our undivided, unabated affection. May the Lord sanctify it, as a mean to lead us both more closely to himself. We are comparatively happy now; but we shall not be completely so, till we arrive in the better world of perfect peace and purity. My heart rejoices at the thought of meeting you soon at Liverpool; but what will that be to the joy when we shall stand together before the throne of glory, free from every imperfection and trial; when we

shall see Jesus as he is, be fully conformed to his image, and join in singing his praises for ever. With what complaisance shall I then consider you as the instrument the Lord prepared to preserve me from ruin? And how will you praise him for our union, if he is pleased to make me, in any measure, useful to promote your faith and hope!

I cannot, as yet, judge how my affairs will terminate. If it please the Lord, if it be the right place and the right time, I shall succeed. But I would have you prepared for what we call a disappointment. But disappointments are neither more nor less than providential intimations of the will of God.

London, April 12.

I was with the bishop of Lincoln this morning, and he has fixed on Monday next for my examination. If I get safe through that scene, I suppose my ordination will soon follow. He received me with great civility and candour. The beginning of my interview with the bishop of Chester was not so pleasing. I uspect that some person or persons at Liverpool had written to him, and not in my favour. Great men not being able to see every where with their own eyes, must depend upon information, and are liable to be imposed upon by misrepresentation. He said, that before he could authenticate my testimonials, he must ask me some questions. But when I showed him Lord D***'s letter, a full stop was put to all inquiries but what were agreeable. He became very sociable; kept me in chit-chat near an hour; and, when I took my leave, he wished me much success. I shall be glad to have this

business fairly finished. My mind has been greatly unsettled. Much company, and frequent changes, do not well suit me. Friends smile and favour me on all sides; but creature-regards affect me too strongly, and I feel a degree of dearth in the midst of plenty. I hope I shall be better when we return to our old uniform way of life, so far as the expected change will admit of uniformity. I have been more familiar with the higher sort of life of late than formerly, and see it in its greatest advantage and beauty. But still my heart is at home; and I am fully convinced, that no assemblage of earthly things could make me more happy than I have been, and hope to be again, in the moderate situation to which we have been accustomed.

I desire to praise God for the progress of your recovery; and begin now to think seriously of our removal. How will you be able to travel, so soon after your long illness and confinement? But why do I look so far beforehand? Will not He, who has done so much for us, do what is still needful? I must break off. May the Lord bless and comfort you.

London, April 10.

Just in the apparent moment of success, new difficulties occurred, which seemed to threaten a total overthrow to my business. So the poor sailor is sometimes alarmed with the apprehension of shipwreck, when his port is in view. But, as I trust all difficulties are now obviated, through the kind interference of Lord D****, to whom I have occasioned too much trouble, I shall say no more of them.

I waited on the bishop of Lincoln this morning, and

have reason to revere him for his candour and tenderness. The examination lasted about an hour, chiefly upon the principal heads of divinity. As I was resolved not to be charged hereafter with dissimulation, I was constrained to dissent from his lordship in some points. But he was not offended; he declared himself satisfied, and has promised to ordain me, either next Sunday, in town, or the Sunday following, at Buckden. Let us praise the Lord!

London, April 20.

What thanks do I owe to the Lord, for all his goodness to me! He made me willing to resign all, and to enter upon a very obscure and limited service, for the sake of his Gospel; but when it came to the point, he mercifully interposed to prevent it. I ascribe it to his goodness, that my application to the archbishop, six years ago, did not succeed. There is now a probability of my being comfortably fixed, in a more agreeable connexion. May he keep me humble and dependent, and all will be well. But I see some striking and unexpected instances of the great danger to which the countenance and friendship of persons of distinction may expose a minister. We are poor, weak, inconsistent creatures, if left but a little to ourselves. My next acknowledgments are due to Lord D****. He has greatly interested himself in my behalf. Considering his rank and some other circumstances, I might wonder that he should submit to take so much trouble, did I not observe, from other instances, that he thinks not of himself, where there is any probability that his influence can procure benefit to others.

As I have a little leisure, I must fill up the paper; but how? I can repeat that I love you, that I continually offer up prayers and thanks on your behalf. I can tell you again, as I have told you a thousand times, that your dear person, your affection, and all its interesting proofs and pledges are deeply engraven on my heart. Oh! what do I, what do we both, owe to the God of our lives! Shall not the mercies we possess in each other, though great and valuable in themselves, be much more so in their effects! Shall they not lead us higher, and prove as steps by which we may rise to a still greater happiness! Yes, I trust so. When I look back with wonder to see how the Lord has led us thus far, by a way which we knew not, I am encouraged to hope that the end will crown the whole. How gracious has he been to me, in preserving me from innumerable inconveniences into which I have been ready to plunge myself; and in giving me so many advantages and friends! How gracious has he been to you, in visiting you seasonably, yet gently, from time to time; in mitigating your illness; preserving and composing you during my absence; in permitting you again to go abroad! And now, I hope, you have a change of situation before you, which will prove to your comfort in every respect. It is true, as you observe, if we remove to Olney, we shall not be wholly without trials. They are inseparable from this mortal state, and they are necessary to discipline us, and to keep us from wandering. Let us, therefore, guard against resting in the creature. Let us pray for submission to the will of God, and that we may welcome every event, from a sense of his hand being concerned in it, and a persuasion, (which his promises warrant,) that, some way or other, all shall conduce to our final advantage.

Buckden, April 28.

I HAVE waited upon the bishop this afternoon; have gone through all the previous forms, and am to be ordained, (if the Lord please,) at eleven to-morrow.

I hope the repeated intimations I have given you concerning this long-expected to-morrow, have been in time to engage you in earnest prayer for me. I now almost stagger at the prospect before me. My heart is, in some measure, though I dare not say suitably, affected. I am to stand in a very public point of view, to take the charge of a large parish, to answer the incessant demands of stated and occasional services, to preach what I ought, and to be what I preach. Oh! what zeal, faith, patience, watchfulness, and courage, will be needful for my support and guidance! My only hope is in the name and power of Jesus. May that precious name be as ointment poured forth to your soul and mine! May that power be triumphantly manifested in our weakness!

I purpose now to cross the country to Olney, just to peep at the place and people, and to take the Liverpool coach at Stony-Stratford. If so, we may meet on Thursday. My heart jumps at the thought. But the Lord's time will be the best.

Buckden, June 14.

I CAME hither in safety, about eleven this morning. I have been twice at prayers at the chapel. The bishop received me very kindly. Whether I have a

second examination to go through or not, I cannot yet tell.

I understand I cannot be dismissed very soon on Monday; so that it will probably be tea-time before I am with you. I think you will trust me not to make any unnecessary delay. You know where I left my heart, and that, even if I was in a much more agreeable situation than at present, I would break through all for your sake, and prefer the little vicarage of Olney with you in it, to the palaces of kings without you.

I meet here with many candidates for orders, but I know not that there is one of my own turn. However, they are all very civil; and I endeavour to accommodate myself to them, as far as duty and conscience will permit.

I pray the Lord to fill your heart with his love. Then you will bear my absence as easily as we can brook the want of a candle when the sun shines in his noon-day strength. Pray for me, and for yourself. And remember that, amidst the many things which require a degree of our attention, one thing is more especially needful. I commend you to his grace and blessing.

Olney, July 12.

Your letter (as you will believe) was very welcome. I desire to be thankful for your safe journey. I set off the moment the coach was out of sight, and had a pleasant walk home. As I was passing through Emberton, an old woman came after me, and invited me to her cottage. Five or six more women soon joined us. We

talked, sung a hymn, and I prayed. I thought it a good baiting place by the way.

I am well, and as comfortably settled as I can desire, during your absence. I feel the want of your company, but hope to bear it without anxiety. I cannot wish to love you less; I hope it is impossible. But I wish, for us both, that our regard may be sanctified, and kept in due subordination. While I rejoice, that we are so happily sensible of what we owe to each other, I have cause to mourn that our love to him should be so faint and disproportionate. His love to us passes knowledge. He loved us, when we were enemies, with a love expensive and interesting, beyond expression; a love that exposed him to ignominy and torture, that cost him his blood and his life; a love that makes over to those who believe in him, all the riches of grace and glory.

You need not propose Mr. T****'s case to me as caution. Our situations and constitutions are different. However, I shall try to be prudent and careful. But our times are in the Lord's hands. He who preserved me at Liverpool, will preserve me at Olney, so long as he has service for me to do. Beyond this, I have no great desire to live, unless upon your account. And, I trust, he will spare me while it is needful, and good for you. If we have an eternity to spend together in his praise, it is no great matter who is removed first, or how soon. All our tears will be then wiped away.

All our friends here seem to vie in civility; and those who are not friends are kept quiet. I hope not to provoke them by any part of my behaviour; but if they will be offended with me for speaking the truth, I cannot help it. As to provision, I am quite easy about it. The Lord, who brought me from Africa, where I was

destitute of every thing; who has given you to me, and dealt so bountifully with us hitherto, will not suffer us to want any real good, now he has so visibly displayed his power and providence in placing me here.

Olney, July 14.

I OBSERVE what you say about Hempstead. It seems a situation in some respects desirable, and, was I only to consult my affection for you, I should wish to see you in more agreeable circumstances than I can expect to procure you here. But we have striking examples, to remind us of the danger of choosing for ourselves, and being dazzled by great prospects. I am well convinced that the Lord brought us hither; and without as clear an intimation of his will, I hope I shall not indulge a wish for a removal. The people love me; express a warm desire for my continuance; our assemblies are crowded, and I hope the Lord makes my preaching useful. While things bear this pleasing appearance, I should not only be ungrateful to the Lord and my friends, but blind to my own comfort, if I listened to a new offer.

My health continues good, and I can hardly form a wish but for you. But when, which is very often, I think of the distance between us, I give a little sigh, and long to see you. I pray many times in a day for your peace and establishment in grace; and I rejoice in the hope that God is gently drawing you to himself, by the alternate inducements of light afflictions, and weighty comforts and favours. Let this be your encouragement and mine, that no one ever sought him (in the way of his own appointment) in vain. Though he may seem to de-

lay, he will surely come, and overpay our expectation. For myself, I have been brought, almost imperceptibly, thus far. When I think how cold, dull, and heartless I have been; how often I have wandered, how often trifled upon the brink of temptation; when I consider what powerful, vigilant, and subtle enemies are combined against me, and how many professors have fallen on my right hand and my left, I am amazed at the greatness of his mercy in preserving me. I am a living witness that there is forgiveness with him; and that he is able to save *to the uttermost.*

Olney, July 21.

The account you give me of the gentleman who dined with you, is very affecting. Every loss is gain that is over-ruled to bring the soul home to God. But the Lord hath dealt still more favourably with us. How often have *we* deserved to be separated! Yet we are spared to each other. May our lives praise him, and may we be freed from idolatry! To love each other, and dearly too, is no sin; nay, it is our duty. But he will not suffer a creature to usurp his place in the heart. The time of our ignorance, he mercifully winked at; but now he has shown us what is right, it behooves us to be upon our guard. Oh! that he may so display the power of his grace, that the bonds and shackles which detain our souls might be broken! He can, he will do it, if we wait and pray.

I now can judge by my own feelings, how much you must have suffered during my long stay in London, especially sick and confined as you were, and anxious

for the event of my journey. I never pitied you, as I ought, till now. For though I likewise longed every day and every hour to see you, I had many things to divert my attention, and alleviate the feelings of absence. But at present, I am as you were then, at home and alone. But as I know, let who will have your company, I have your heart, I can make a good shift for a time.

How are brother and sister C**** ? Do they love like us ? No, they cannot yet. For love at first is a child, and grows stronger by age. I wish them happy ; more happy than this world can make them.

Olney, August 5.

I FEEL your head-ache at this distance. Your frequent indispositions are not pleasant ; but I trust they are mercies, for which we have reason to be thankful. Our comforts and crosses are all from the same hand. We have chastisement, only because we need it. I aim to leave you in the Lord's hands. Should we not forget ourselves, if he did not seasonably remind us what, and where, we are ? In the case of some of your dear friends, for whom you grieve, you may see how, in all probability, it would have been with you, if his eye of love had not been fixed upon you from your birth. He prepared his dispensations, to withdraw you gradually from that life of vanity and dissipation to which you might otherwise have been enslaved all your days. And he has been gently dealing with your heart for several years past ; leading you, if slowly, yet I hope surely, nearer to himself. How much of his ways, how many

of his people, has he shown you! and he has given you a heart to love them, and reconciled you to things to which you were once as little inclined as those whom you now pity.

If I consider the endearing union he has cemented between us, with all its effects, only in a temporal view, I prefer it to all the treasures, pleasures, and honours, this world can afford; so that I would not exchange the joy I feel in the thought that you are mine, to be monarch of the whole earth. But, surely, it is much more valuable, considered as the mean by which the Lord designed to unite us both to himself.

1766.

Olney, September 12.

I PRAY God to bless to you the ordinances and conversation you are favoured with in London, that you may go into Kent filled with the spirit of truth and love. When you are there, I hope you will make good use of the Bible, and throne of grace, to preserve you from being infected by the spirit of the world. Ah, what a poor, vain thing is the world! We have both found it so at times, (though we once loved it,) and shall find it so again. But may the Lord keep us alive to a sense of its vanity, before more evil days return to extort the confession from our feelings! Sickness and pain, and a near prospect of death, force upon the mind a conviction of the littleness and vanity of a worldly life. But there is a more pleasing way of learning this lesson, if we pay due attention to the word

of God, and pray for the light of his countenance. If he is pleased to make his face to shine upon us, all that the world can offer to bribe us, will appear insignificant and trivial as the sports of children.

He who has given us this desire, will, I trust, answer it, and unite our souls to himself for ever! Happy state! To have peace with God, by Jesus Christ; liberty of access at a throne of grace; an interest in all the promises; a sure guide by the way; and a sure inheritance at our journey's end! These things were once hidden from us. We were so blinded by the god of this world, that we could look no further than the present life. But, even then, the Lord looked upon us with an eye of mercy He led us on, gradually, by a way which we knew not, to bring us into the paths of peace. How wonderful has our history been, not mine only, but also yours! How often has he made himself known as your Deliverer and Physician, in raising you up from the gates of the grave! May we always remember his goodness in your last affliction. How did he sweeten the bitter cup; strengthen you with strength in your soul; enable you to pray for yourself, engage the hearts of many in prayer for you, and then speedily answer our prayers. Let us then excite each other to praise him! I hope this little interval of absence will be useful, to make me more sensible of his goodness in still sparing you to me. I make but a poor shift without you now from day to day; but I am comforted by the hope of seeing you again shortly. Had you been removed by your late fever, I should not have had this relief! May we then live to him, and may every day be a preparation for the parting hour. Dark as this hour seems in the prospect, if we are established in the faith and hope of our Lord, we shall find it supportable;

and the separation will be short. We shall soon meet again, happy meeting! to part no more! to be for ever with the Lord; to join in an eternal song to him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood! Then all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and we shall weep no more for ever.

Olney, September 26.

I was with you in spirit this evening, at the Lock, and prayed that the Lord would give a blessing to what you might hear. To love and trust the Lord Jesus, is the great lesson we have to learn. We are slow scholars, but he can teach us effectually. Without him, the very *best* of this life is insipid, and his presence can make the *worst* supportable. I often think, and hope, you do not forget how graciously he supported and answered you, in your late distress. There was a something that could, and did, bear you up under pain and anguish, and refresh your spirit when your bodily strength was almost worn out. This is an instance of what he can do; and should be a bond of gratitude upon both our souls. Your health is restored, and mine is preserved. May we devote our whole selves to him. He has great things to bestow; and if we feel our need of his mercy, we are properly qualified to receive it. We are not called to buy, but to beg; to receive, without money and without price. By believing, all becomes freely and surely our own; not on the account of our prayers, but of his promise, blood, and mediation. And all he requires of us is, to be humble and thankful; and the more he gives us, to desire still the more. Oh, my dearest M***, I bless his name for bringing us together,

and for sparing us to have some knowledge and communion in these great things! How many that were joined about the same time with us, or since, have been separated by death! How many are living in mutual disgust! And how many, who seem happy, are, in reality, miserable, because they know nothing of the Lord, and of his goodness!

Olney, October 8.

I BEGIN to count the hours to Friday. I am very desirous, though not anxious, to see you. The Lord has been good to me in your absence; the time has not seemed tedious, and all things, at home and abroad, as well as I could wish. I begin to write to-night, because I have devoted to-morrow to be spent, with as little interruption as possible, as a day of prayer, to entreat him to give us a happy and sanctified meeting, and that our future lives may be devoted to him. How great are our obligations for uniting us at first; for restoring us so often; or raising you up from so many illnesses; for preserving our affection; for over-ruling our concerns; for providing us friends; and, especially, for directing our hearts to seek his face. And still he is loading us with his benefits. Though we have not been without our trials, yet, all things considered, who has passed more gently through life thus far? And with whom, upon the face of the earth, could we be now content to change? But with nothing has my heart been more affected, than with his goodness in and since your late illness. I am persuaded something passed then, that has left a relish and effect upon your mind

ever since. Is it not so? Are you not determined to be his? Next to the salvation of my own soul, I have had no desire so often in my heart, so often in my lips, as to see you wholly given up to him? And, I trust, he has been answering my prayers, my many thousand prayers, from year to year. What a bauble, in my eye, would the possession of the whole earth be, in comparison with our being fellow-heirs of the hope of eternal life.

I purpose to be in time to receive you at Newport. Perhaps I may wait at Mr. R****'s, as he lives opposite to the inn gate. But when I hear the sound of the coach, I shall take my leave with very little ceremony. You never were more welcome to me in your whole life, than you will be this time.

1768.

Olney, April 5.

I HOPE this will be the more welcome for being unexpected. May it find you in health and peace, panting after communion with God.

I think of you all day; and though I do not seem quite so much at a loss when you are from me as I have sometimes formerly been. I am sure it is not because I love you less. The Lord has given us a sufficiency of mutual affection, which has been strengthened by a long series of endearments and kind offices, and by a near participation in the comforts and trials of life. And now it should be our great concern and prayer, that our love may not be inordinate, or irre-

gular; nor interfere with what we owe to the great Lover of our souls. The apostle's question, "Was Paul crucified for you?" suggests a thought which disparages all creature-regard, as the splendour of the noon-day sun overpowers the twinkling of the stars.

May the Lord open your ears and your heart, that you may receive profit where you are. Do not give place to unbelief. Jesus is both an able and a willing Saviour. Pray for a tender conscience, and a dependent spirit. Watch against the motions of self; they are subtle and various. Let no engagements prevent you from reserving seasons of retirement for prayer, and reading the Scriptures. The best company, the best public ordinances, will not compensate for the neglect of these. At the same time, guard against a spirit of bondage; nor fetter your mind by too many rules and resolves. It is our privilege to serve the Lord with cheerfulness; not considering him as a hard master, but as a tender father, who knows and pities our weakness; who is ready to pardon our mistakes, and to teach us to do better. He accepts us, freely and graciously, when we present ourselves before him, in the name of Jesus, his beloved Son.

Martham, April 15.

We reached this place to-day, about noon. I am very well, only much fatigued. The man you saw step into the coach, was drunk all the way to Colchester, (where we left him.) He swore, for a time, almost at every word. As soon as I could find a favourable opening, I spoke to him. He was civil, and promised to swear no more. But, poor man! he might as well

have promised not to breathe. However, he was tolerably quiet afterwards.

My heart loves you, my dearest, and many an ejaculation I breathe out for you; which, indeed, is almost the only kind of prayer I have found time or room for since I left London. But I hope to be recruited and composed soon. I am likely to have business enough in hand next week. At present, I am dry and empty; but the fountain from whence I have been often supplied, is still full and flowing. Excuse a short letter. If it was not to you, I could not write at all.

Olney, May 1.

The Lord brought me home in safety last night. I believe our dear people are truly glad to see me; and I am sure I rejoice to be with them again. I preached this morning from 2 Sam. vii. 24. I wish my dearest a growing experience of the subject. No honour can be compared to that of being the Lord's people; no privilege like that of having him for our God.

I must not write much, for it is almost time to find a text for the afternoon, which I have not yet done. I went this morning into the pulpit, as having only a small piece of bread, and of fish, to set before the multitude. But, through mercy, it multiplied in the distribution, and, I hope, there was a comfortable meal for those who were present, and some fragments left that will not be lost.

It is not choice, but necessity, that makes me sometimes live, as we say, from hand to mouth. While my head is full of new persons and places, I cannot do otherwise. And I have reason to be thankful that my

hopes are seldom disappointed upon such occasions; though I know not when I have been so straitened and embarrassed, as I was the other night at the Lock. I rather wonder that this happens so seldom, than that it happens at all. How justly might the Lord take his word of truth out of my unworthy mouth! Perhaps he saw it good for me, that Mr. Self should have his comb cut rather there, than in another place; and I hope there is that in me, which is as willing to appear to a disadvantage (if it must be so) at the Lock as at Olney: though, to be sure, flesh and blood is pleased to be thought *somebody*, when among dear friends or fine folks.

Olney, May 3.

I DID not promise to write to-day, but my heart is always ready, and opportunity always welcome. I am in good health, and glad to be again retired from yonder noisy city.

I wrote yesterday to Mr. A****, and, in my evening walk, my thoughts and prayers turned much upon the affecting stroke he has received. Indeed, it has been seldom out of my mind since I came home. Besides my concern for his loss and my own, (there is no cause to mourn for *her*,) I consider it as a loud speaking lesson to me and to you. How often has she been raised up from the brink of the grave, in answer to prayer; and yet, now, suddenly and unexpectedly removed? We likewise have been long preserved, and often restored to each other. But a time will come when every gourd will wither, every cistern be broken. Let us pray for a waiting, resigned, and dependent frame

of spirit; for ability to commit ourselves, and our all, into the merciful hands of Him who careth for us; and that, while we are spared, we may walk together, as help-meets and fellow-heirs of eternal life. We shall not be parted a moment sooner, for living in daily expectation of our appointed change; but the thought may be a happy mean of composing our minds, and of preventing us from being too much engrossed, either by the sweets or the bitters of this transitory life. Many occasions of care and perplexity, that are apt to waste our time and wound our peace, would be avoided, could we duly consider how soon we shall have done with all these things. May you, may I, be more rooted and grounded in the truth, more humbled and comforted, more filled with that love, joy, and unspeakable peace, which the Gospel reveals, and for which the promises of God warrant us to pray. Be not discouraged because you have nothing of your own. The bucket is put into the well empty, and because it is empty, the Lord has opened wells of salvation for us, and has promised that we shall not seek his face in vain.

I long to have you at home with me; for though I am, in a sense, very comfortable, the house looks unfurnished without you, and I miss you in every room. How then must the *Moor-side* look to our dear friend! Every step he takes, every person he meets, must remind him of his loss! But I trust the Lord is, and will be his support. May his grace be with us! Then we shall be equal to every thing that can possibly befall us, and need not be afraid of evil tidings.

Olney, May 5.

Your last dear letter found me in peace, and, I hope, did me good. It quickened my prayers and praises on your behalf. I never attempt to pray without putting up some petitions for your spiritual welfare, nor without aiming at least, to express my sense of gratitude to the Lord for joining our hands and hearts. Your affection, and its consequences, are continually upon my mind, and I feel you in almost every thought. I am willing to hope that I am, in some degree, freed from that idolatrous regard which made me place you too long in a light for which I deserved to forfeit you every day. But I am sure my love has suffered no abatement; yea, I am sure it has increased, from year to year, though I endeavour to hold you more in subordination to Him to whom I owe you, and by whose blessing alone it is that we have found comfort in each other. I trust the Lord had a further design than our accommodation in the present life, in bringing us together; even that we might be joint witnesses and partakers of his grace, and fellow-heirs of his salvation. Our earthly connexion must cease; but an eternal union in happiness is an important prospect indeed! Every thing else, however valuable in its place, sinks into nothing upon the comparison.

If youth, and health, and life, could be prolonged for a thousand years, and every moment of that space be filled up with the greatest satisfaction we can conceive, this seemingly long period must at last terminate; and, when once past, it would appear short and inconsider-

able, as the eighteen years we have already spent together do at present. But if we are united in the faith and hope of the Gospel, we shall never part. Even that separation which must take place (so painful at times to think of) will not deserve the name of parting. It will be but like the one coming down first from London, and the other safely following in a few days. And, however flesh and blood may start at the apprehension, the case of Mr. A****, and many others, sufficiently prove the Lord's faithfulness to his promise. and that he can support those who trust him, in the most trying circumstances. Let it, therefore, be our chief concern to attain a good hope that we are his, and he is ours, and then we may cheerfully commit the rest to him. He can forgive sin, impart grace, subdue corruption, silence unbelief, make us strong out of weakness, and do more than we can either ask or think. And what he does he does freely, without money and without price. He does not require us to help ourselves, before we apply to him, but to come to him for help, and we shall not come in vain. Fight, therefore, my dearest, against unbelief, and the Lord will give you the victory. Tell him, what I am sure you are convinced of, that you have nothing, deserve nothing, can do nothing; but that you have heard he is mighty to save, and has promised, that none who apply to him shall in anywise be cast out. None ever did miscarry in this way. If they did, his truth and faithfulness must miscarry with them.

Olney, May 15.

I HOPE your visit in Kent will, upon a review, be made profitable to yourself. You will admire the Lord's goodness in selecting you (as one of a thousand) to the knowledge of his truth, when you might (according to the views with which you first entered upon life) have been still swimming down the stream of vanity and folly with the multitude. How little did either of us think, in those early days when I first knew you, to what the Lord designed to lead us! Do not you see, and say, He has done great things? How often has he raised you from the gates of death? With what mercies and gentleness has he followed you? What a great advantage has he afforded you, in so large an acquaintance and intimacy with those who fear and love him! Shall the enemy urge you to draw discouragements from these multiplied instances of the Lord's goodness? I hope not. Do not give way to unbelief. Do not indulge perplexing thoughts of the secret counsels of God. What is revealed in the Scripture calls for our attention; and there it is written, as with a sunbeam, "They that seek shall find." It is true, when we are seeking, he often exercises our patience; but he has told us before-hand to expect it, and has given us encouragement, by parables, examples, and promises, to continue praying, and not to faint. Though he tarry, wait for him. Though he may seem to treat you like the woman of Canaan for a time, yet he is full of compassion and mercy. The humble spirit, the principle of faith, the heart-felt repentance, and every other gracious disposition to which the promises

are made, are all his gifts, which he bestows freely on the unworthy.

Since you know that you are a sinner, and that he is the only Saviour, what should prevent your comfort? Had he bid you do some great thing, you would at least have attempted it. If a pilgrimage to some distant place was the appointed mean of salvation, would you be content to sit at home and perish? How much rather, then, should you keep close to the throne of grace, when he has only said, "Ask, and you shall receive!"

When we first joined hands, neither you nor I knew much of the things pertaining to our peace. But as soon as the Lord began to show me a little of the way, how much, from that time to this, you have been upon my heart, is only known to him: and I trust he has answered, and is still answering, my prayers. What passed in your last illness I shall never forget. I think, had he then taken you from me, I could have rejoiced in my grief. From that period I have had a hope of more value to me than the possession of the earth, that he has taken a sure hold of your heart, and that he will not cease to draw you nearer and nearer to himself. Continue to pray, and watch over your spirit. Keep always in mind that you are a sinner, and Jesus is a Saviour of sinners. Such thoughts frequently recurred to, are means by which the Lord composes and sanctifies the frame of our tempers, and the strain of our conversation. Accept this little homily in good part, and may a blessing attend you in the perusal.

1769.

Olney, May 18.

I PREACHED yesterday at Collingtree. The church was full. Returned in safety before nine in the evening.

The case of those who decline from the good way, after they seem to have chosen it, is lamentable. Thus it might have been with us; but thus I trust it shall not be. The Lord has made known to us his name of love, and has shown us, what we should never have seen, had it been his pleasure to kill us. Let us live under abiding views of the all-sufficiency of Jesus the Saviour, and we may rejoice in hope. The peace of God, which passeth understanding, is seldom attained, but through a course of conflict. God gave Canaan to Israel by promise, and put them in possession, by the power of his own arm, yet they must fight for every inch of ground. The desire and the accomplishment, are equally of grace; yet, in the use of means, and with our eye to him, we must strive. Our poor exertions would be in vain, if he did not require them; but now they are needful, and shall be successful. The rod of Moses, the instrument of performing so many miracles, was no better than common wood, till the appointment of God gave it a wonderful virtue. Had Moses then refused, or neglected, to use it, he could have done nothing. Now the means of grace, especially prayer, may be compared to the rod of Moses. If we go on, with this rod in our hands; if we call upon God, meditate upon his promises, and plead them from day to day, he will make our way prosperous.

Olney, May 28.

The Lord has mercifully brought me home in peace. The fatigue of the journey and the excessive heat on Tuesday, occasioned a slight fever, which went off that evening, and returned yesterday, as I was taking horse at Bicester. However, I rode, not unpleasantly, to Buckingham, and there, for fear of overdoing, we took a post-chaise to Stratford, where Mrs. U**** kindly met us, and brought us home. I have since taken the bark, and all the usual steps observed in intermittents. Preached without pain on Sunday. The fever is now gone, my appetite returned, and I am well. My slight illness was rather a baulk and hindrance with respect to my friends at Oxford and Sutton. But, taking all things together, I never had a more comfortable journey. I felt such a peace and composure, in considering myself and all my concerns in the hand of the Lord, as I cannot describe, and can seldom attain when in health. I had not one impatient or anxious thought, not even about you; and seemed quite willing, if the Lord had so pleased, to have died upon the road. I was, yesterday, if ever in my life, as a weaned child. I hope this account of my indisposition will not hurry you home sooner than you intended, for I am quite recovered.

Olney, May 30.

My thoughts will accompany you to Wimbledon today. Give my affectionate respects to our dear friends,

and tell them, I should have had much pleasure in being of the party. Besides the chief inducement of their company, I am fond of the place, and should promise myself some pleasant hours in the walks. But I know neither places nor company can communicate any real good, unless the Lord be present. And when he is near, any place, and even solitude itself, is agreeable. It is my mercy to find that in Olney which contents and satisfies me.

I have such a levee of kind inquirers every morning, that I am much interrupted in writing. It is pleasing to be beloved, and doubly pleasing to me to know, that the favour the Lord has given me here, is chiefly on account of the Gospel which I preach. The affection that is built upon this foundation will endure for ever, and will flourish when every other tie shall cease ; and thus, I trust, it is between my dearest M*** and me. How closely has the Lord united us, by marriage, by affection, by the strongest and most endearing obligations! But all these respect the present life, and must terminate with it. But I trust there is a still nearer relation between us, in the Lord and in his truth, which shall subsist to eternity. In the mean time, may he give us to know more of the power and comfort of it, while we walk together here below; that we may rejoice in the knowledge of what he has done already, and in the prospect of what he has provided for us hereafter. Believe, my dearest, and you shall be established. Pray, and your faith shall be confirmed. Resist the devil with the sword of the Spirit, the good word of God, and he shall flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. I know your discouragements ; but they are not peculiar to yourself. Surely, he has appeared for you in times past, and I cannot doubt but he will again.

I am glad to think the time of your return draws nigh. I miss you every day and hour; yet I cannot say that time is burdensome, or that I am very dull, or *unked*, as they call it here, in your absence; as the people think I must be. Several of them almost threatened to write on Sunday, to tell you how ill I was, and to beg you to return immediately; but their fears magnified the case. They long to see you, however, for your own sake, and give the most simple and affecting proofs that they love you dearly.

1770.

Olney, May 20.

I HAVE had a morning walk, in which I was favoured with some liberty; at such seasons you are always remembered. While I would praise God that we have been so long and so comfortably spared to each other, I must not forget that an hour of separation must come, and that the time is uncertain. It must be so; and it is well. Surely we could not wish to live always here! Oh for a clearer view of our interest in the love and all-sufficiency of the Saviour; that we may stay our souls upon him, and possess a stable, unshaken peace! It is He who has given us a desire to seek him, because He has purposed to be found of us, Jer. xxxi. 3. And, though our desires are too faint, and disproportionate to the greatness of their object, he will not despise the day of small things, nor quench the smoking flax.

I feel your absence, and long for your return; but I am not disconsolate. It was otherwise with me once.

I can remember when the sun seemed to shine in vain, and the whole creation appeared as a blank, if you were from me. Not that I love you less. The intercourse of many successive years has endeared you more and more to my heart. But I hope the Lord has weakened that idolatrous disposition, for which I have so often deserved to lose you. I am astonished at his patience and forbearance, that when I presumptuously gave you that place in my heart which was due only to Him, He did not tear my idol from me! To what dangers has my ill-conducted regard often exposed you! But he is God, and not man. I hope it is now my desire to hold nothing in competition with Him, and to intrust my all to his keeping and disposal. If we hold each other in a proper submission and subordination to Him, he will bless us, and make us mutually comforts and helpmates. He will sanctify the bitter of life, and give the sweet a double sweetness. His blessing is the one thing needful; without it, there is neither security for what we possess, nor true satisfaction in the possession. We have no good in, or out of ourselves, or which we can impart to another. We may pity, but we cannot relieve each other when in trouble. We cannot remove one pain, or give one moment's peace of mind to those whom we best love.

Many prayers are, and will be put up for you and Mrs. U**** while you are away. It is this endears Olney to me. The Lord has a praying people here, and they pray for us. To be interested in the simple, affectionate, and earnest prayers of such a people, is a privilege of more value than the wealth of kings. In answer to their prayers, the Lord has placed a hedge about all our concerns, blessed our going out and coming in, and preserved us and ours in health, when sickness or death

have been in almost every house around us. And, doubtless, I am much indebted to their prayers, that with such a heart as mine, and such a frame of spirit as I frequently mourn under, I am still favoured with some liberty, acceptance, and usefulness in my ministry.

1771.

London, Nov. 19.

We came safely to town about noon. I have just parted with my dear and honoured friend, with whom the hours of the journey passed very pleasantly. I am wondering at myself, and at every body about me. It seems strange to think of being so suddenly whirled away from you. So many preaching and other engagements are provided for me, that I believe I cannot return before Saturday. I hope the Lord will be with you, and that you will be led earnestly to seek a blessing for me and for yourself. I have breathed out many a prayer for you since I saw you, and hope to do so while I can breathe at all. May He give us to grow daily in the knowledge of his grace, and to rejoice in the views of his excellency, and of our interest in Him as our God and Saviour. This is the one thing; and the only thing which is promised absolutely, and without a possibility of failure, to those who desire it. Every thing else is vain, uncertain, and changeable. But he will surely, though gradually, make himself known to the heart that seeks Him.

I have been with Mrs. C****; she is sorely afflicted, but appears to be in an humble, dependent frame.

From how many heart-rending distresses, by which others are suffering, has the good providence of God preserved us! May He make us thankful for the exemption, and teach us to bear our smaller crosses with a becoming submission to his will!

1772.

Clapham, July 2.

If it was not to my dearest M***, I could not write so soon after dinner. But though my belly is full, and my head empty, I must tell you that I had very quiet, agreeable company in the coach, and a pleasant ride to Deptford; where I mounted a horse my dear Mr. T**** had sent for me, which said horse brought me safely hither. Thus the Lord graciously preserves me from place to place.

I am always a little awkward without you, and every room where you are not present looks unfurnished. It is not an humble servant who says this, but a husband, —and he says it, not in what is called the honey-moon, but in the twenty-third year after marriage. Nor do I speak it to my own praise, but to the praise of our good Lord, who, by his blessing, has endeared us to each other. Inconstancy and vanity are inherent in our fallen nature; and, if left to ourselves, we might have been indifferent, weary, and disgusted long ago. But He has united our hearts; and, I trust, the union shall subsist to eternity. May we possess, while here, the peace which passeth understanding, and live under the abiding expectation of perfect happiness hereafter.

Olney, July 9.

I HAVE not much news to tell you. I have been to see Mrs. R****. You remember how near death she was, by falling into the water, about a fortnight ago. She was since persuaded to take the air, in a one-horse chaise. They were hardly half a mile from the house, when the horse suddenly fell, upon a smooth road, and by the shock she was thrown out of the chaise, over the wheel. You will not wonder that she was much hurt and bruised, if you consider her weight. No bones were broken; but the fall, in addition to her previous illness, has brought her very low, and I think she cannot continue long. What thanks do we owe to the Lord for his merciful care of us in all our journeys, when others meet with such disasters close to their own home!

The state of some of our family where you are is much upon my mind. I hope I have engaged many to pray for them. The Lord grant that all you see, hear, and feel, where you are, may draw your heart still nearer to himself! What is all below but vanity? There is no solid comfort, no abiding peace, but what we derive from above. Once we knew nothing of this. But the Lord directed our path in life, in subservience to the designs of his grace. How few of those with whom you were acquainted in your early years, have any right knowledge of God or of themselves. We set out upon this plan; and if mercy had not stopped us, we should have gone on till we had perished with a lie in our right hands. Do, my dearest, take encouragement from what the Lord has done, to believe

that he will do still more for you. Do not think that he has opened your eyes, and taught you that your help is in Him alone, only to disappoint you. The enemy would keep you from seeking him diligently and constantly, and would persuade you that you get little or no good from all your attempts; but believe him not. Rather believe the word of promise—that though he may seem to delay, he will not, he cannot, deny those who persevere in asking in the name of Jesus. Thus much till the post comes in.

How little do I know of my own heart! While I thought myself sure of a letter, I vainly supposed I could be easy, though I should not receive one. But when the post arrived and brought no letter from you, my spirits sunk in a minute: and, I fear, I shall be too impatient in wishing for Friday. Surely my dear M*** knows me too well to think that, after a whole week's absence, I should not be longing to hear from her. If you inadvertently neglected to write, I must gently blame you: it ought, indeed, to be very gently, as it is the first fault of the kind I can charge you with since our happy marriage. I rather think you have written, but by some mistake the letter has missed; for I am willing to hope you are well. I am quite disconcerted. But if I receive one by the next post, you need be in no pain for me, for that will set all to rights. I have been to bury a corpse at Weston this evening. I promised myself a pleasant walk, but the want of a letter spoiled it. I would fain have directed my thoughts to subjects of more importance, but I could not. Alas! I am a poor creature. Pray, my dearest, write often; for, next to your company, I prize your letters above any thing, merely temporal, that this earth can afford.

Olney, July 12.

I WAITED about the street yesterday, till it was time to go to Orchard side, and then deputed Molly to supply my place. At half past four the horn sounded, and my heart went pit-a-pat. But I soon saw Molly pass the window, and by her looks and her speed, I guessed she had a letter. I snatched it from her and read it, and was presently well.

My heart was melted the other day, when I found the little book in your drawer, in which you had begun to set down such texts of Scripture as had more particularly engaged your notice, and especially when I read the two pages of prayer with which you had prefaced them; a prayer agreeable to the promises of God, and, I trust, dictated to you by his Holy Spirit. My soul gave a hearty Amen to every petition. I am sorry that any thing prevented you from proceeding in what was so well begun: but I hope you will resume it when you return. The blessings of the Gospel are open to you. Could you steadily strive against the hindrances and discouragements thrown in your way, and simply and patiently abide in the use of the means of grace, without giving way to vain reasonings, you would soon experience a growth in peace and comfort. To patient faith the prize is sure. May the Lord help you thus to wait; and may he give us more freedom to converse for our mutual encouragement. I am a strange, inconsistent creature in this respect, as in many others. Next to the salvation of my own soul, there is nothing lies so near my heart as your spiritual welfare; and yet I am often tongue-tied, and can speak

more readily to any body than to you. Let us mutually endeavour to break through every restraint, that we may be helpmates in the best sense of the word. I preached this morning from Deut. xxxii. 10. The passage applies to all the Lord's people, "He found them in a waste howling wilderness." How emphatically does it apply to me? He redeemed me from the house of bondage in Africa, and has selected me as a pattern of his grace to the chief of sinners. What a mercy to me! I trust to you also. For he appointed us for each other from the first, and his hand brought us together, and into our present situation, by a train of miracles.

1773.

London, November 18.

Past three o'clock, and a cloudy morning. So says the watchman. I hope my dearest is now in a sweet sleep. When I have done writing, I shall proceed to the coach, which sets off exactly at four. Pray do not fear my being robbed or hurt in the dark. For I expect a guard will go with me, One to whom "the darkness and the light are both alike." I went through a very long dark lane, on Wednesday evening, with my dear Mr. Th*** ; but no one disturbed us, for the Lord was our preserver.

You may be sure that my heart is continually with you. I seldom pass many minutes without darting a thought upwards in your behalf. The knowledge of your affection affords me the greatest pleasure I can receive or desire, of a temporal kind. But your ap-

prehensions on my account, when I am called from you for a season, give me pain. I wish we could both more simply intrust each other, without anxiety, to the Lord's goodness. Surely, he delights in our prosperity, or else why have we been spared so long? or how have we been so mercifully supported, so seasonably relieved, and enriched with so many blessings, from year to year? May all that we experience be sanctified, to humble us, and to increase our dependence upon Him who is always near and willing to help us.

I must go. I carry with me from place to place a heart full of an affectionate and grateful sense of your love, and of the innumerable and invaluable mercies and comforts the Lord has given me in the relation I stand to you.

1774.

Olney, April 27.

I SYMPATHIZE with you; I already feel the concern which you will shortly feel, when you say farewell to your sister and your family. Methinks, if I could prevent it, you should not have a moment's uneasiness, pain, or trial, from the beginning to the end of the year. But how could you then be a partaker of that good which the Lord bestows upon his people through the medium of afflictions? I hope he will give you an entire resignation to his will; and that the grief you and your sister will feel at parting, will be compensated by a cheerful hope of meeting again, perhaps more than once, in this life; but if not here, in a better

world. And when you drop a tear at leaving your father, sister, aunt, and friends, remember that you are coming to a husband who loves you better than it is possible any or all other friends can. You will be more welcome to me on your return, than on the happy day which first made you mine. How will my eyes delight to see you, my ears to hear you speak, and my arms to enfold you!

My text to night is Psa. xxxvi. 7, 8. It is a full and gracious promise. The weak and defenceless shall be sheltered under the wings of the Almighty! How does the hen cover her brood with her wings! If her power was equal to her will, nothing should hurt them. The Lord our Saviour makes use of this image for your encouragement; and his power, like his compassion, is infinite, Again, the hungry soul shall be satisfied with fatness; not merely kept alive, but feasted, so that it shall thrive and flourish. Lastly, the miserable shall not only taste, but drink of pleasures; not a single draught, nor out of a vessel that will soon be empty, but from a river whose stream is perpetual, whose source is inexhaustible. We need not fear drinking a river dry. The streams of this river make glad the city of God upon earth. How much more abundantly will it flow in heaven? Here, then, is our encouragement. Creatures fail and change, but the Lord is always the same. And he gives the water of life freely, without money and without price. He invites all who hear, and receives all who come.

The clock is striking twelve, therefore I wish you a good night. May the angels of the Lord, yea, the Lord of angels himself, watch over your bed and your sleeping hours. My chamber looks rather solitary at present, yet, through mercy, I sleep soundly.

Olney, April 17.

I THANK you for your letter. I do not complain of its brevity. A single line to inform me of your safe arrival, would have gladdened my heart, and, I trust, have excited my gratitude to the Lord our preserver. Not that I think you in more real danger upon the road than when at home; for a thousand unthought-of dangers are always near us, and our own short-sighted care is insufficient to preserve ourselves, or each other, for a single moment. Yet my foolish mind is prone to be more solicitous about you when you are out of my sight. I am conscious of many things which make me wonder at the Lord's goodness in sparing you to me so long; and that you have not been oftener, or more heavily, afflicted for my sake. But his thoughts are high above mine, as the heavens are higher than the earth. And it is our mercy that we are not under the law, but under grace.

I rose from my knees to take my pen in hand, and shall daily pray for you all. I trust the Lord has given your sister that knowledge of himself which will make her situation in Scotland agreeable. The earth is the Lord's; and his servants, wherever their lot is cast, have his throne of grace always near them. I know not how she may fare there in point of ordinances. However, if the Lord is pleased to dwell in her heart and in her house, he can make up every defect. His Providence, undoubtedly, leads her thither; and we can be no where better than in the path of duty. His blessing upon secret prayer and the reading of his word

will keep her soul alive, though the public preaching should not be quite to her wish.

Though I miss you continually, I am neither lonely nor dull. I hope the Lord will give me a heart to wait upon him, and then I shall do well enough till you are restored to me. I need not wish the time away: it flies amazingly fast, and, alas! too poorly improved. These little separations should engage us to seek his blessing, that we may be prepared for the hour (which must come) when one of us must have the trial of living a while without the other. The Lord, who appoints and times all things wisely and well, He only knows which of us will be reserved for this painful exercise. But I rely on his all-sufficiency and faithfulness to make our strength equal to our day. It will require a power above our own to support us under either part of the alternative, whether we are called to leave or to resign. But He who so wonderfully brought us together, and has so mercifully spared us hitherto, can sweeten what would otherwise be most bitter to the flesh. If he is pleased to shine upon us, all will be well. His presence can supply the loss of the most endeared creature-comforts, as a candle may be easily spared when the sun is seen.

Olney, April 23.

Yesterday I went to see Mr. C****. I found him in much distress, and his wife in more. They took my going very kindly, but the coming of the coroner prevented my stay. The burial was last night. The churchyard was full of people; but as the hour was late, and

the parents broken-hearted, I did not say much at the grave. The lad was in his fourteenth year; was just come home from school; and asked for victuals, but before he got any, went with the cart, which was going for hay. His father was cutting the hay at a small distance, and seeing the boy get up upon the sharps, he called to him, but was either not heard or not regarded. Another son drove the cart; the horse suddenly took fright, and the field being full of hillocks, the cart was soon overturned. The boy fell under the wheel and was instantly killed. He neither spoke nor stirred. Mr. C**** saw all that passed, and was then forced to be the mournful messenger of the news to his wife. It seems, she was wrapped up (as we say) in her children. I was told that when she heard of the event, she flew out of the house, and ran a considerable way, she knew not whither, before she could be stopped. She had afterwards a long succession of fits, and they feared she would have lost her senses. But when I saw her, she was more composed. She seems to be not without a sense of religion; she had been long a hearer in the lower meeting, but of late has come more to my church.

It is a heavy trial; but the Lord can cause good fruits to grow from a bitter root. How much praise do we owe him for that protection which has covered us, as with a shield, in all our journeys, as well as at home? I hope soon to have a call to thank him, for conducting you safely into Kent.

I have been to see Mrs. C**** again. It is a pleasant, retired walk to their house; but it was not pleasant to me this time. My heart, alas! was dry as a chip, unsettled as a weathercock. However, I could and did pray for you. I hope she is a good woman. She told

me she had often wished that some occasion might bring me to their house. But neither she nor her husband could take courage (such a formidable animal, it seems, am I) to ask me. She is now troubled for having wished I might come. But I hope the stroke may prove a blessing to them both.

Olney, April 25.

I THANK God I continue in good health, and well enough in spirits. But the frame of my mind is cold, wandering, and unpleasant. For the most part, when you have been abroad, I have been favoured with more composure, and the hours have passed more agreeably and profitably, than at present. But you need not wish yourself at home merely upon this account. For the Lord alone can remove the complaint of a dull, dissipated frame. Your tenderness can do much for me, but you cannot relieve me in this case. But though I am not as I wish to be, I am not unhappy.

My text to night, when I lay my head upon my pillow, will be Psalm xxxiv. 15. Who are the righteous, upon whom the eye of the Lord is fixed, and to whose cry his ear is open? Not the self-righteous—but the helpless, unworthy sinners, who, without any plea but the word of promise, put their trust in the name of Jesus. These are accounted righteous for the Saviour's sake. They are accepted in the Beloved; and, because they ask in his name, their prayer is heard. Why should not we, my dearest, open our mouths wide, and expect great things, when we have such an advocate? Do you say, How shall I know that He is mine? I answer,

He is an advocate for all who will commit their cause to Him. They are not described by name, but by character; as sinners who have no hope in themselves, are not willing to perish, and, therefore, hearing that he is able and willing to save to the uttermost, venture upon his word, cast themselves at his feet, and commit their all into his hands. Have not I, and have not you, such thoughts of ourselves, and of Jesus the Saviour? Wait, then, for Him; give not way to unbelief: he can do all that he says, and he says no more than he means to perform.

Olney, April

I FEEL for you every day while you are at Chatham; but I hope and pray the Lord will sanctify all to your profit. If it depended upon me, you should have nothing to grieve you for a moment; but I am glad our concerns are in his wise and gracious hands, who appoints us a mixture of afflictions and trials, not because he takes pleasure in giving us pain, (our many comforts afford sufficient proofs of his goodness,) but because he sees that troubles are often better for us than the continual enjoyment of our own wishes.

I am concerned to find you so very accessible to fears and alarms upon my account. Indeed I would not exchange the affection which gives rise to them for crowns and kingdoms. But why should you make yourself unhappy? Why distrust the good hand of God, which has so long preserved us? Why should you take the course which, in the nature of things, is most likely to bring upon you the evil which you fear? Do not you consider, that you yourself expose me to

the greatest danger, by your sinful distrust of the Lord, and your over-much dependence upon a poor creature, who loves you, it is true, even as his own soul; but who, with the warmest desires of your happiness, is, in himself, quite unable to promote it, unable to procure you the smallest good, or to shield you from the greatest trouble. May it please God so to impress and fill your heart, that your supreme and undivided regard may be fixed upon Him who alone is worthy. Then we shall be happy in each other indeed, when all our thoughts and aims are properly subordinate to what we owe to him. If we loved him with all our hearts, we should find it easy to trust him with our concerns. And then it would not greatly signify which of us went first to heaven, or by what means.

Let us, my dearest, pray for each other. Methinks we still wander in a wilderness, upon the very brink of a happy state, and yet cannot enter. How strange, that we who read of such a Saviour, who are acquainted with such promises, (made to the most unworthy,) and are so fully convinced of the reality of spiritual blessings; how strange is it, that we should be thus alternately elevated or cast down by trifles! that we should sit, like Hagar, lamenting over an empty vessel, when the fountain of life runs so near us! Keep this to read to me, when it may come to my turn to be pinched with unbelief. Perhaps you will soon have occasion to say, Physician, heal thyself.

I have had a pleasant walk this evening, and was enabled to pray for you, that you may gain a blessing upon all your removals, and be restored to me in peace. My pillow text to-night will be in Psal. xxxix. Suppose I take ver. 8. "Deliver me from all my transgressions, make me not the reproach of the foolish."

How rich is the grace that has provided a ground for so great a petition as is expressed in the first clause! What arithmetic can compute the whole that is included in the word *all*. One trangression would be sufficient to sink the soul into ruin. But the blood of Jesus Christ frees those who believe in him from the guilt of all. And his Spirit is sufficient to set us at liberty from the power of all sin, so that not one shall have dominion over us. Yet the supply of this Spirit is to be sought by earnest prayer; otherwise, notwithstanding what we know, and what we have received, we are liable to take such steps as would make us the reproach of the foolish.

Whenever you return, you will be welcome to me, as gold to the miser. But I hope to support the interval without being burdened. My days are filled up with employment, and at night I sleep soundly; so that no part of my time hangs upon my hands.

Olney, May 2.

Methinks I see you just now. Your spirits sink a little, because you are taking leave of your sister and friends. I allow you to drop a tear or two. But I hope to-morrow, and before you have travelled many miles, you will resume your cheerfulness, and leave them and yourself in the hand of the Lord without anxiety. He fitted your sister for the post he has assigned her, and, I trust, he will not only bless her, but make her a blessing to many around her. I sometimes think that the child's lameness may give such a different turn to his future life, may prevent so many things that might otherwise have happened, and give occasion to

so many things which otherwise would not have happened, that, in the way of means, it may have a near connexion with the salvation of his soul. It is good to trust the Lord, and leave the management of all to him. He is wise. He sees to the end of our path. We, poor, short-sighted creatures, cannot see an inch before us, and if left to our own choice, should involve ourselves in troubles by the very steps we should take to prevent them.

I shall be glad to hear you are at London, because you will then be thirty miles nearer to me. But I remember when there were not only hills, but oceans between us. Then the Lord brought us together in safety. It seems to me now, almost as if we had been separated for the time of an African voyage. But I wait with patience your summons to meet you at Newport. I would rather see you than all that the world accounts magnificent. I had rather hear you speak, than hear all Handel's music. I would rather call you mine, than possess waggon-loads of gold. Some persons would deem this the language of folly; but it is the language of love and of truth.

It grows late. The maids are gone to bed, and I shall soon retire to mine. It is rather lonely at present; but, I thank God, I am a stranger to the remotest wish that it were lawful to me to have any companion but yourself. Since the Lord gave me the desire of my heart in my dearest M***, the rest of the sex are no more to me than the tulips in the garden. Oh, what a mercy is it, that I can say this! I speak it not to my own praise, but to the praise of the Lord. I have a vile heart, capable of every evil; and, in myself, am as prone to change as a weathercock. But, with respect to you, he has been pleased to keep me fixed, as the north-pole,

without one minute's variation for twenty-four years, three months, and one day; and I humbly trust that he will thus keep me to the end of my life.

Olney, May 4.

The wind blows hard at N. E. so that I suppose your brother and sister are embarked. If they are, I do not mean to be very uneasy for them; and I hope you will not. The God of the dry land is God of the sea likewise. He is as near us in a storm as in a calm; and we need his protection no less in a calm than in a storm. May the Lord give to them and to us his grace; that, looking to him, we may be comforted under all separations and changes, by an assured hope of meeting, to unspeakable advantage, in a better world! We are all lessening the distance apace to our everlasting home. Our voyage through life will sometimes be incommoded by storms, but the Lord Jesus is an infallible, almighty pilot. The winds and the seas obey him. None ever miscarried under his care; and he takes charge of all who intrust themselves to him. Has he not made us willing to do so? Then we may be sure he will not disappoint the hope which he himself has given us. Let us make his good word our compass to direct our hearts to the haven, to the heaven, where we would be!

I need not wish time away; it flies with an amazing swiftness, even in your absence. But I hope it will be better with me when you return. I am not uncomfortable, but I am a little unsettled. I can do more business in two days when you are at home, than in three when you are abroad. For though I sit many

an hour in my study without seeing you, yet to know that you are in, or about the house, and that I can see you when I please, gives a sort of composure to my mind: so that I must not say your company is a hinderance to me upon the whole; though occasionally my attention to you might make me leave something undone which I ought to have done. In short, whether with you or without you, I am a poor creature, and see much to be ashamed of every day, and in every circumstance.

My comfort, and my care,
My safety, and my snare,
You have been, and you are!

However, I have great reason to bless God that I ever saw you.

Olney, May 9.

I am very glad you heard and approved Mr. ****, and especially that you mean to call upon him. I hope you will pray and strive against those prejudices which your affection for me, and your jealousy lest any person should not look upon me with the same partiality which you do, have sometimes occasioned. These thoughts have been the greatest hurt to your spirit, and the greatest hinderance to your comfortable progress, of any thing that I know; and have sometimes given me no small uneasiness. I cannot wish you to love me less, but I often wish you could be less anxious about me. Pray for me, that I may be simple, upright, and diligent, in my walk and work; and then you may cheerfully leave my concerns with the Lord,

and may be assured that he will give me as much acceptance and favour as is good for me. Be upon your guard against making yourself, and of course me, uneasy about things which neither of us can help or alter. Temptations follow tempers; and Satan is always subtle and busy in his attempts to break our peace, and divert our thoughts from the main object. Though your company is my dearest and most valued earthly comfort, I shall be well repaid for a month's absence, if you bring home a desire to watch and pray against those wrong impressions which your love to me has sometimes obtruded upon your mind. And I hope to study myself the lesson I recommend to you; and to strive and pray for the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. But, alas! though I know in theory what a Christian should be, I am still sadly deficient in practice.

Give my love and thanks to all my kind friends. I was once without a friend; but God has since given me many. Who that had seen me at the Plantanes, would have expected what has since taken place? How unworthy am I of all that I have received! Very unworthy of being made happy in you; but, above all, unworthy of the honour of preaching the Gospel, which I too long despised and blasphemed!

My evening walk was outwardly pleasant, but my mind was confused. However, I prayed for you. Let me be as I will in other respects, you are always present to my thoughts. My love has been growing from the day of marriage, and still it is in a growing state. It was once as an acorn, but it has now a deep root and spreading branches, like an old oak. It would not have proved so if the Lord had not watered it with his blessing.

Olney, December 21.

As you intimate you shall not come before Saturday, I write again. I need not wish the interval away, though I long to see you: Saturday will soon be here. I thank the Lord, and I thank you, for your letter. Indeed, he has been very gracious in supporting you and your father, so much beyond expectation; surely my heart has had a fellow-feeling with you. But such sorrow as he by his grace is pleased to sanctify, will be hereafter numbered amongst our mercies. I often speak much, in public, of his all-sufficiency to uphold under every trial I have seldom had a more remarkable proof of it, than in the course of this late affliction. May he enable you to improve this instance of his goodness, as an argument against that vain reasoning of unbelief which has so often discouraged you. If he had not been with you, I am sure you would have been crushed like a moth. I hope, when we meet, we shall rejoice in his loving kindness; and that you will be able to say, "Because he has heard me, therefore I will call upon him, as long as I live."

May we learn from what we have felt, and from what we daily see, of the vanity of all things here, to fix our thoughts upon the one thing needful; that we may experience his loving kindness to be better than life itself, and may have a sure resource in his love, against the pressure of every remaining trial that may be allotted us; that we may rejoice as those who are still liable to be called to mourn, and mourn as those who have a happy prospect of rejoicing for ever at last. I thought on Monday morning that I was praying for

you, while you were stepping into the coach. But when you did set off yesterday, I was asleep. But the Shepherd of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, was pleased to watch over you in your journey; for which I desire to praise him. Sickness and death have entered many houses here since you left home. But we are still preserved. Our times are in the hands of him who careth for us.

I have had another peaceful night, and awoke this morning in health. I hope you can say the same. We lie down and arise in safety, because the Lord sustains us. Oh! to say, this God, this great God, is our God; our sun, and shield, and portion! What a privilege is this! What a counterbalance for every trial! And since he has said to our hearts, "Seek ye my face," and has given us a desire to answer, "Thy face, O Lord, will we seek," it is not possible that we should seek in vain. The Lord bless and keep you, lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

1775.

London, August 26.

I MUST send you a short letter for once. May the Lord bless you, give you composure of mind, and do you good every day. I know you will be ready enough to come to me when you can, and therefore I leave the *when* to you. I like Monday best, because it is nearest; but if you stay till Tuesday, I will wait patiently. But you know I am not quite the thing when you are absent. Methinks I would have you always at my elbow.

Give my love to my dear child, who, I hope and believe, will be a good girl. And I beg of her, and of all who are about her, that your rules, to which she so cheerfully submits when at home, may be broken as little as possible. Tell all her friends that I love her, and accept her as my own child, and shall account the care of her to be one of the most important concerns of my life.

Olney, November 18.

I BEGAN to listen at four for the sound of the horn. I listened till five before I heard it. Soon after I received your dear letter. My heart travelled with you from stage to stage, and I set you down in the Old Jewry, just at the time you mention. But, Oh! what cause have I to be thankful that you were shielded, by the Lord's protection, from the many possible events which might have spoiled my calculations, and sent me to bed to-night with an aching heart. I hope you are now at Chatham. I have put you into the Lord's hand, who I trust will do you good. Yet I cannot help being anxious till I know how you felt, and what you met with, upon your arrival. If your dear father be still living, give my love and duty to him, and assure him that he is always in my thoughts and prayers. May the Lord support you, and keep up your spirits, by a sense of his power and goodness!

Olney, November 21.

I TOLD the people, on Sunday evening, my good news, and read your father's letter. Both he and you were earnestly prayed for. But I suppose more than a hundred were detained from us by colds and illness. There is scarcely a house without some persons ill in it, and the general word is, that they never had such a sort of cold before. Many have taken to their beds; but in a few days most of them begin to amend.

W. and R. B**** sent me word, that their little girl was dying, and I have since heard she is dead. I expect to find them in much trouble. Thus, at one time or another, every family and every person finds vanity entwined with their choicest comforts. It is best for us that it is so. For, poor and vain as this life is, we are sufficiently attached to it. How strong, then, would our attachment be, if we met with no rubs or thorns by the way? Is not the history of every day a comment upon those words, "This is not your rest?" I think you and I must acknowledge that the Lord has given us, from the beginning of our union, a favoured lot: I think we have experienced as much of the good, and as few of the evils of life, as any persons whom we know. And yet, if we could fairly estimate all the pains, anxieties, and crosses we have met with, from first to last, it would make a considerable abatement in what, when taken in a more general view, may well be deemed a happy state. And how soon has the best of it passed away! Nothing now remains of many endeared hours, but the remembrance. Though we have had the best that such a life can afford, it would be a

poor happiness indeed were this our all. But blessed be God, who has given us a better hope than we had when we set out. For, I think, we then proposed no higher satisfaction than we could find in each other. It was well for us both that I was constrained to leave you for three long voyages: for though those frequent separations were very irksome at the time, they were sanctified to make us look further. Oh! he has led us wisely and graciously! He has done all things well. We have nothing now to ask, but for a deeper and more thankful sense of his goodness.

Olney, November 26.

I AM thinking of you, and lifting up my heart for you, almost continually. You are in the Lord's school. He sent you to give you the most satisfactory proofs of his goodness to your father; which I hope will prove an encouragement, and a cause of great thankfulness, to yourself. He is very gracious, and, I trust, will show himself so to you, and in you. But you deprive yourself of comfort by listening to the voice of unbelief, which weakens your hands and prevents your progress. How often are you distressed, as though you were only to see the goodness of the Lord to others, and not to taste of it yourself! Yet the path of few people through life has been more marked with peculiar mercies than yours. How differently has he led us from the way we should have chosen for ourselves! We have had remarkable turns in our affairs; but every change has been for the better, and in every trouble, (for we have had our troubles,) he has given us effectual help. Shall we not then believe that he will perfect that which

concerns us? When I was an infant, and knew not what I wanted, he sent you into the world to be, first, the principal hinge upon which my part and character in life was to turn, and then to be my companion. We have travelled together near twenty-six years; and though we are changeable creatures, and have seen almost every thing change around us, he has preserved our affections by his blessing, or we might have been weary of each other. How far we have yet to go, we know not; but the greater, and (as to externals) the pleasanter part of our journey is probably passed over. If our lives are prolonged, the shadows of the evening, old age, with its attendant infirmities, will be pressing upon us soon. Yet I hope this uncertain remaining part of our pilgrimage will, upon the whole, be the best: for our God is all-sufficient, and can make us more happy by the light of his countenance, when our temporal comforts fail, than we ever were when we possessed them to the greatest advantage.

Olney, December 8.

When you told me that S**** was coming home, my heart sunk like a stone; but it soon revived upon finding you had altered your purpose. If she had come, I must either have sent her back again, or have set out myself to fetch you. If you were not where you are, she would be very useful to me here: I feel the want of her. But as things stand, you must either both come, or both stay; for I should not have one comfortable day if you were at Chatham alone. Every inconvenience will seem light, if compared with the thoughts of your being left by yourself. Your dear

father is not acquainted either with my feelings or my situation; but you will do your best to apprize him of both. As to your return, if there be good grounds to think that the time of his departure is near at hand, I ought not to desire it; but if the unexpected turn the physician speaks of should prolong his life, for months or years, and restore him to the same state in which you left him in September, your presence at home will soon be so necessary, that nothing but the most urgent call of duty can dispense with it. I speak not merely upon my own personal account; you are greatly wanted by the sick, by the poor, and by your family. There are many things to which I cannot attend as I ought, while you are away. I hope, if your father recovers, so far as to bear a removal, he will give up business, and come and live with us; and spend the remnant of his days amongst those who can join with him in talking of that better land to which he is going, and in praising the Lord for his goodness.

I hope nothing that I have written will make you uneasy. My mind has been a little agitated; but now I have put down my thoughts upon paper, I am composed again. Your absence is, indeed, a trial; but who am I, that I should not have trials? Ah! I have deserved much more than this; even to be broken, with breach upon breach, and to be deprived of you altogether. The Lord helps me, in some measure, to resign all to his disposal, and to say, Not my will, but thine be done. This separation is not like some which we have formerly known: there are no oceans between us now, nor am I under a painful suspense, as when I could not hear of you for a whole twelvemonth. Even then he was pleased to watch over us; to support us; and restore us to each other, again and again. There-

fore, my soul, hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him. Yea, I will praise him now, for his goodness to you. I know you have felt much: afflictions must be felt to be sanctified. But you have been strengthened according to your day. We seem, as I lately observed, to have had as smooth a journey, thus far, as most people. Yet, at intervals, our trials have been very sharp. Mine are always so when I feel for you; though few things with which your peace or comfort are not connected, give me much trouble. I pay, at some seasons, a heavy tax for loving you, I had almost said too well. But I cannot love you too well, unless I love you improperly. I believe it was of the Lord's goodness that I loved you at first; and I am sure that both duty and gratitude bind me to love you now. The love which a husband should bear to his wife, is expressed in very strong terms by the apostle, Ephes. v. 25—28. But you certainly have been my idol; and I often fear, you are too much so still. Alas! how difficult is it to draw the line exactly between undervaluing and overvaluing the gifts of God! The good Lord pity and pardon us both, and take such a full possession of our hearts, that no rival may interfere with what is due only to him!

Olney, December 7.

If your letters (as you think) afforded me neither pleasure nor comfort, I should not so earnestly wish you to write; but you may be assured they afford me both, and that, in your absence, nothing of a temporal kind can give me equal satisfaction. I usually grow thoughtful and absent about four o'clock, when I expect the post

is coming, till I hear the horn; then my spirits flutter. But when I receive a letter from you, have read it, and find you were well, I presently feel composed, and, I hope, a little thankful. Thus it was to-night. Glad I am to hear that your dear father is preparing to part with his house, and seems not unwilling to come to Olney; where, I trust, he will find me heartily joining with you, to do every thing in our power to make his remaining days comfortable.

The language of Psal. xl. 5. suits me well. There is no end to the inventory of my mercies. May he who has given so much to us, and done so much for us, add the crowning mercy of a thankful heart! Though I can talk of thankfulness, I feel much insensibility; but I know, that while sin dwelleth in me, it will have effects. It will distress, but it cannot condemn those who believe in Jesus. In Isaiah, xliii. 24, 25, we have a character of the Lord's salvation: it is free, for his own sake. It is full; the blotting out of sin, like a cloud, beyond recall and remembrance. And the subjects of this salvation, are they who have wearied him by their iniquities.

Olney, December 23.

Many prayers are offered for you; and I hope we shall soon have to offer praise. I pray, not only that we may be restored to each other, but that our long separation may be sanctified to us both. Though it has been a gentle trial, compared to what the Lord might justly have sent, and mingled with great mercies, yet a trial it is to me, and perhaps more so to you. Not that I mean to yield the palm to you, as if you can be

more sensibly affected by absence than myself, but I allow my situation at home is more pleasant than yours while abroad. Considered as a trial, we have cause to be thankful that it has been so much sweetened; and we should likewise aim to draw some useful lessons from it. I hope I have learned some, if I can but practise them. I cannot feel how much I miss you, when you are from me but a few weeks without thinking what support I should need, if I was wholly deprived of you. The like thought, I suppose, is sometimes upon your mind. The hour will probably come, when we must experience the alternative of leaving, or being left. For though possible, it is not very likely, that we shall be removed both at once. May the Lord impress the event of this unknown hour upon our minds; not to distress us, but to keep alive in us a sense of the insignificancy of every thing here, compared with the one thing needful! May he cause our faith to grow and take deep root, and fix in us such a persuasion of his all-sufficiency and grace, and of our interest in his promises, that we may trust and not be afraid, but cheerfully commit all that is before us to his care. He who has supported us for weeks, can support us for years, and make those things tolerable which seem the most formidable in prospect. We are prone to be over-earnest about matters, which will one day appear to us of no more importance than the recollection of a dream. But, oh! the peace of God satisfies and fills the heart, and leaves but little room for anxious cares, or a warmth of spirit about trifles!

I acknowledge your kindness in sending me tolerably long letters, and by way of thanks, I have this time taken a large sheet of paper, and will try to fill it. If I had leisure, and could find something to say, I would

please myself with writing, not sheets, but quires. But I have many things to attend, and meet with hourly interruptions. When I awakened our dear little girl this morning, I asked her for a text, and she very promptly gave me Isa. xlii. 16. which contains an epitome of my own history, and of yours also. How blind were we, when the Lord brought us together! How little did we then think of the paths, by which, and to which, he had purposed to lead us. But he caused light to shine upon our darkness, he has made a thousand crooked things straight before us, and we have good reason to trust his promise that he will not forsake us. Crooked things will occur in our path, now and then; but, if he be with us, we need not fear. And the time is short. May we learn to speak the Psalmist's language from our hearts, "Lord! what wait we for? our hope is in thee." We have seen much of the good which this life, in a temporal view, can afford. We have felt enough of its evils to know that all here is mingled with vanity and vexation of spirit. And I trust, that before he removes us, he will make us heartily willing to go, that we may behold Him who shed his precious blood to redeem our souls.

Olney, December 26.

The Lord is very good to me. He maintains my peace, and preserves me from evils and snares. But I feel much abomination in my heart. I can truly say, it is a cage of unclean and hateful birds. I dare not intrust any one, not even you, with a detail of the wild, foolish, and dreadful thoughts which often pester my mind. The Lord who is infinitely holy, sees all, yet

he bears with me, and permits me, vile as I am, to call him mine. Is not this wonderful? Oh! he is full of grace and mercy! I hope you think and find him so.

Yesterday was a busy time, but I was led comfortably through. I had a good night, and slept this morning till past seven. I am sufficiently indulgent to Mr. Self. Do not fear my pinching or over-working him. I need a spur more than a bridle. You often think I do too much; I much oftener see cause to confess myself, comparatively at least, a slothful and unprofitable servant. In the concerns of immortal souls, with eternity in view, and so much depending upon the present moment, what assiduity or importunity can be proportioned to the case? I ought to be always upon the wing, seizing any opportunity of aiming to be useful, whether by word or pen; and, of course, much more careful and diligent than I am to redeem the time. The Lord pity and pardon us all, and make us as wise in our generation as the men of the world are in theirs!

Olney, December 27.

We are all well, and therefore you need not be alarmed at my writing so soon. Mr. R**** called on me this morning, and when I spoke of my intended journey, he said, he must go to London soon, and that if he could be of any service, he would suit his time to ours, and willingly conduct your father to Olney. When he first spoke, my heart answered, Thank you for nothing; I do not choose to miss the pleasure of seeing my dear M*** at

least a whole week sooner than if I wait for her at home. But I soon considered, Mr. R**** is an active, strong man, who has his eyes and his wits about him, and could, perhaps, upon many occasions, be much more helpful to my father than I could. So I must mention this to her, and if she approves it, I must, for my father's sake, submit to stay a little longer before I see her. If you think that my coming will do as well or better, here I am in waiting. Nothing but prudence, and a sense of duty here, would prevent my setting off towards you this night. I should much prefer it to going to bed. If it depended on my will only, I feel myself well disposed to take a journey of five hundred miles, for one day or half a day of your company, if I could have it upon no easier terms. I need not multiply words; you well know that I cannot wish for an excuse to prevent my coming to you. But your father's safe and comfortable travelling is at present a chief object with me. I love him for his own sake; when he gave his consent that you should be mine, he laid me under an obligation which I can never repay; and over and above all this, he is your father.

1776.

Olney, January 7.

For fear the snow should prevent my being with you on Tuesday, I write a hasty line to tell you that we are all well.

I suppose, if Self had his will, he would think his journey to you of such importance, that no snow should have fallen to retard it, or make it inconvenient. Poor

proud creature! What a presumptuous worm, to admit one thought against the appointment of the Most High; instead of being duly thankful that you and I are safely sheltered, and well provided for, in this severe weather! What hardships are some persons suffering this morning, while you, I hope, are sleeping peacefully in your bed, and I am sitting by a good fire. Far be it from us to repine, if in some things our inclinations are a little crossed. It is often, yea, always, in mercy when they are. We have seen it so in many instances already, and shall hereafter see that it was so in all.

Let me beg you not to give way to fears on my account, nor to calculate the depth of the snow at present; nor of the floods, when the snow shall melt. Since you have had an interest in me, the Lord has preserved me in the midst of many dangers, such as you can form no idea of. We may safely trust him now. His arm is not weary; he is always near us, and his providence watchful over those that fear him. But I know I cannot reason away your apprehensions, any more than I can my own when they are exercised about you. I will therefore direct my thoughts upward—Lord do thou keep her heart staid upon thee, and give her power to trust all in thine hand, and submit all to thy will! Amen.

Olney, January 9.

If I did not feel for your anxiety, I should be quite easy, for we are all well, and surrounded with mercies. I thought to be in London to-night, and with you to-morrow; but the Lord appointed otherwise. The

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greatest fall of snow I ever remember, has prevented me; but I might have been prevented by illness. Till ten or eleven this morning, I thought of making myself as easy as I could at home. But after the wagon came in, finding that the road was open to Newport, and it beginning to thaw, I supposed, if I could reach thither, I should find the high road passable enough. As I chalked it out, I was to reach St. Alban's by eight, set out from thence at four to-morrow morning, breakfast in London, and drink tea in the afternoon with my dearest M***. Accordingly, about noon we began our march. Mr. R**** led the van, I was in the centre, and Richard brought up the rear. He was designed to bring the horses home. I was a little concerned how he would be able to manage the three horses; but my concern was needless, for we returned as we went. The road from Newport was impassable to carriages. Neither chaise nor mail could move. I came safely home, well pleased that I had made the attempt, and only anxious lest you should be alarmed. I wish you may be able to drive away your fears upon my account, or rather pray them away. I am in safe hands. The Lord is my protector, and yours too. But if your painful feelings cannot be avoided, may they be sanctified! My love is unwilling that you have an uneasy moment; but the Lord's love is not only tender, but wise.

Nor let us regret, that this fall of snow should prolong our separation. It fell by the direction of God's providence, both as to the time and the spot. And he likewise times our concerns, or the snow might have detained your father on the road, as I hear it has some company, who were glad to be sheltered in a small public-house by the road side, and can neither get backward nor forward. Come; all is well. We are, indeed, asunder; but I

am not in Africa. How things are now we know. What unforeseen events the interposition of the snow may have prevented, we know not. As it is, the consciousness of loving and being beloved, remains with us; and this is better than every thing else would be without it.

Olney, January 20.

You say you cannot describe your uneasiness, when you neither saw me, as you expected, nor heard from me. I need no description. I felt it for you. I well knew how you would be situated, unless you were apprised that the roads were stopped. Had the snow fallen with you as with us, you would have accounted for my not coming. I think no motive, less powerful than yourself, would have induced me to go to Newport when I did. It was at least an unpleasant ride; and I could not have managed it had I been alone. We were obliged in some places to quit the road, which was impassable, and to go round the open fields; and, at times, both the horse and his rider were almost buried in the snow. If either fatigue or expense could have prevented your anxiety, you would have had none. But I hope all is well over now.

It may help to make us patient, it should, indeed, make us thankful, to reflect upon the vast distress that multitudes are probably in, both by sea and land, at this moment while I am writing; some starving with cold, others with hunger, some lost in the snow, others dashing against the rocks. Ah, my dearest, how has sin filled the world with wo! And we are sinners like others; but our sufferings are light compared with

what many endure, and still more light, if compared with our deserts. The Lord has done a great thing for us, in showing us the way of salvation. Here may our thoughts and desires chiefly fix. If sin be pardoned, if we are accepted in the Beloved, then He will guide us by the way, and heaven will be our portion at the end. And see! He is seated on a throne of grace, and ready to bestow every blessing that we need, more than our scanty minds can either ask or conceive. I am at a distance from you. But, alas! what am I? If you were here, I could afford you no comfort or help, but by his blessing. But he can do you good without me. He can sensibly refresh you, or secretly support you, and be unto you as rivers of water in a dry place.

Olney, January 29.

I AM not surprised that you sometimes find it hard to be reconciled to your present situation. I was much comforted by the strain of cheerful submission expressed in your two former letters; but I know, from what passes in my own heart, that we cannot maintain such a resigned frame of spirit by any power of our own. I wish you, however, to look back a month or two, to the time when you feared something had happened to me. You then thought, if you could be sure that I was well, you could make light of every inconvenience. The present severe weather is a dispensation from the Lord. Thousands feel much more terrible effects from it than we have felt; and I know no ground of claim that we have to an exemption from a share in those trials to which all are exposed. May the Lord help us to submit and

wait patiently; for, after all, we can alter nothing. We may make things worse, by a want of resignation, but we cannot mend them.

I acknowledge that your part of the trial has been the hardest; yet mine has not been light, especially if what I have felt for you be taken into the account. Yet, upon the whole, the Lord keeps my mind attentive to what I have deserved, and to what others suffer; so that, in the main, I am quiet and peaceful. If either you or I, or the dear child, had been ill, the trial would have been much greater; yet even then we could not have helped ourselves.

Olney, January 30.

Writing to you is now almost the only thing to which I can attend. Let us try to be thankful that we are all well, and favoured with the necessaries and comforts of life. And let us pray that this separation, with all its inconveniences, may be sanctified. How often have I committed you and myself to the Lord, seemed willing that he should take his own methods with us, and that, in hope he would make all things work together for our good, I would never presume to say to him, What doest thou? And yet, when I think of your present distress, my spirits are so softened and affected, that I am ready to overlook my innumerable causes for thankfulness. I can easily see how this trial may be one of the *all things* working together for our good; but it is his blessing must make it so. For if left to myself, I am capable of forgetting both corrections and comforts.

I am writing by a good fire, and while I almost burn on one side, I feel the frost on the other. How true is that word, "Who can stand before his cold?" And there is another good word, which I hope, in due time, to see fulfilled: "He sendeth forth his word and melteth them; he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow." He can make a speedy and powerful change in the weather. When he giveth his commandment, it runneth very swiftly. Such, likewise, is his power over the heart. He can give peace for trouble, heal our sorrows, revive our graces, and make us joyful in tribulation. If he speaks, it is done. He can bring real and enduring good out of seeming and transient evil, water out of rocks, and honey out of lions. Oh! that I could leave you, myself, and my all in his hands; be still, and know that he is God, and stand still to see his salvation. Remember me to Mr. K****. If he wants his house cleared, I want mine to be filled. But the Lord has interposed. We must not complain; if we do, we directly find fault with Him who appointeth the seasons.

Olney, February 1.

Your mournful letter made me thoroughly uneasy, till this evening about eight, when I was surprised by a note, informing me that your father was at Newport, where they could not get a chaise, but wished to come to Olney to-night, if I could send one. You may guess how I ran and flew to get one. It set off soon; it is now ten o'clock, and I expect them in half an hour. Your being in the dumps, threw me into the

dumps deep enough. I was distressed for your uneasiness, but still hoped what I wrote last would prevent his coming. For I was filled with the most alarming apprehensions of your father's travelling in this weather. I thought the frost would seize his legs, and imagined I saw the chaise stopped in the snow, or overturned, and that he, incapable of helping himself, would be frozen to death. The messenger arrived more than an hour before your second letter, or it would have increased my fears, to have been informed that he was actually upon the road. I have not felt my own weakness, and want of dependence upon God, more sensibly in a great while. But I hope, when he shall have brought us happily together, what we have suffered for each other, during these last eleven weeks, will be remembered by us with thankfulness, and to profit.

P. S. Your father arrived at half past ten, safe and well, as full of spirits as a young man, or as if he had but just risen from bed. He is very well this morning, and so we are all; and every face about me looks more pleasant, as we now can form a reasonable hope of seeing you soon.*

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*From the above period, we were seldom separated. And the few letters I wrote were short, and contained little that I can deem worth transcribing. I add the following, written after our removal to London, when the illness of our dear Eliza Cunningham made a journey to Southampton necessary. I subjoin them chiefly as a testimony of the Lord's goodness in preserving our affection from being diminished by the increase of years. I believe I was not absent from her more than a day or two at a time, after the date of the last, till she finished her course.

1785.

London, Hoxton, August 6.

I LONG to hear that you had a comfortable journey to Southampton, and that you are now with our dear friends. Nothing has taken place among us that can be properly called new; which is a great mercy. For though you have been gone but one day, a single day, or a single hour, may produce painful alterations in a family. The Lord has preserved us through a long course of years, and in different situations, from various calamities which have overtaken others. Our obligations to thankfulness are singular and numerous. When the chaise drove past the corner, my heart seemed to go away with it. It contained what was of more value to me than the cargoes of a whole East-India fleet. Tell Eliza that I love her very dearly. I feel parting with you and with her; but I can cheerfully submit to any thing that may, by the Lord's blessing, contribute to her recovery or relief. She would soon be well if I could make her so. But she is in better hands than mine. I have a comfortable hope that her illness has been, and will be, sanctified to an end far more desirable than health or life itself. Therefore I leave her to the wise and merciful direction of the Lord, who, I trust, loves her better than I can.

I cannot write a long letter to-night. What could I, indeed, say, if I had more time, that I have not said a thousand times over? Yet there still is, and will be, something unsaid in my heart, which I have not words to express. May the Lord bless this little separation

to quicken us to mutual prayer, and to lead us to a thankful review of the mercy and goodness which have followed us through the many years we have been united. How many turns have we seen! Under how many trials have we been supported! How many deliverances have we known! How many comforts have we enjoyed! Especially, what great advantages have we possessed, for seeking and knowing the things which pertain to our everlasting peace! The years we have passed together will return no more. The afflictions are gone, the pleasures likewise are gone, for ever. The longer we live, such pleasures as this world can afford will, more and more, lose their power of pleasing. Only our love, I trust, will subsist and flourish to the end of life, yea, beyond it. It will always be a truth, that the Lord, in giving me you, gave me the best temporal desire of my heart. But the shadows of the evening advance. Old age is growing upon us, and the days are approaching when we shall have no pleasure but what we can derive from the good word of God, and the consolations of his Holy Spirit! These, if we are favoured with them, will sufficiently compensate for the abatement, or the loss, of all the rest. The streams may run dry, but the fountain of living waters will always flow. May his presence be near our hearts, and then all will be well!

I am too fully employed to feel time hang heavy upon my hands in your absence; and if I am permitted to come to you, the thoughts of the journey's end will make the journey pleasant.

Horton, August 18.

I THANK the Lord and you for the comfortable account of your arrival at Southampton, without meeting any harm by the way; and that you found our dear friends well. We entreated the Lord to take care of you; and he has heard our prayer. How often has he heard and answered us! Oh! that we may, at length, learn to trust him without anxiety. I believe I shall find it difficult to procure a supply for my church. But if the Lord pleases to let me see my dear friends at Southampton, while you are with them, ways and means will be found. His will must take place; and I should be sorry to move a step without it.

I long to hear that dear Eliza has been in the water, and how it agrees with her. The Lord can give it the virtue of the pool of Bethesda. If he sees it best for her on the whole, she will find relief. He knows what is best for her; I do not. But I had much rather see her as she is, than in full health and spirits, if careless and fond of dissipation, as is too frequently the case with girls at her age. To bear the yoke in youth, is not pleasant to the flesh; but it has often proved a blessing to the soul.

I commend you both to the Lord and to the word of his grace; I wish you much of that peace which passeth understanding, particularly in this respect, that it has no necessary dependence upon outward things. If we wait upon him, we are sure to be remembered with the favour which he bears to his own people. We have much to be thankful for in this life: yet there is a thread of vanity runs through the whole of it; for He

who has done and suffered so much for our happiness, does not design that we should be quite happy here.

Hoxton, August 17.

I THANK my dear friends for their great kindness to you; tell them that I should be glad to be with you, to share in it. But I cannot come, with propriety, at present. I hope Eliza will be able to bathe soon; and as you are upon the spot, I think you must wait a while. Dependence and submission, in the use of prudent means, are our parts; events are in the hand of God. It was right that you should go to a proper place, whether she can bathe or not, now she is there, because the attempt was thought adviseable. And if bathing would be useful, I think she will yet be able. If not, you have acted to the best of your judgment. What we call disappointments, are dispensations, which, if rightly improved, will answer valuable purposes, and we shall hereafter see cause to be thankful for them. I am willing to think that I love Eliza almost, if not altogether, as well as you do. But there is an over anxiety attending your love, which hurts you, and can do her no good. Your reflections upon this subject please me. I would do, I would suffer, much for her advantage. But still we are creatures. Our Lord God has an absolute right to dispose of us, and of ours, as he sees fit. And as he is sovereign, so he is wise and good. It is a great mercy to be enabled to yield to his will; for every thing, and every heart, must either bend or break before it.

What shall I say by way of close? What, but breathe out the warmest wishes of my heart to you and

for you. Daily, and often, I thank the Lord for giving you to me at first, and for sparing you to me so long. How very different would the history of my life have been, if yours had not been connected with it! That my idolatrous regard had so happy an issue, and that my sin and folly have not yet deprived me of you, are proofs of his singular mercy to me. I have innumerable comforts to be thankful for; but my heart is so intimately united to you, that I scarcely seem susceptive either of pleasure or pain, but with some reference to you. Thus it was when our union commenced, and thus it has been every day since, to this hour. If I could say, with confidence, that I hold you now in your proper place of subordination to Him who gave you to me, then I need not scruple to profess that your peace, your welfare, and your love, are dearer to me than all earthly things. The latter I can say with truth; I hesitate about the former. I fear you are too much my idol still. The good Lord pardon me in this thing. My choicest comfort has been, too often, the occasion of showing me the evil and ingratitude of my heart in the strongest light. Oh! that we may both have grace to live the remainder of our days to Him! Do, my dearest M***, pray for me, pray earnestly for me; and may He return all the good you can ask for me a thousand fold into your own bosom!

Hoxton, August 23.

I THANK you for your letter; and I thank the Lord that dear Eliza is able to bathe. May his blessing attend every means for her relief; and, especially, may her soul prosper! She and you are daily and hourly

remembered. You express the very sentiments of my heart. I am well and comfortable, in the main; but there is a want of something, when you are absent, which no creature can make up. I hope we shall meet to praise Him soon: but, I believe, I must wait till after the fourth of September. I hope I shall then procure a proper supply for a Sunday or two. If it be the Lord's good pleasure that I shall come to you, it will be made practicable.

I cannot but wish, with you, that we may not be separated again; but it is of more importance to wish and pray that our present separation may be sanctified to us. Many things offer to amuse us: some deserve and require a degree of our attention; but one thing is especially needful. What a mercy is it that this one thing, which mountains of gold and silver cannot purchase, is to be had without money and without price! May the Lord engrave it deeply on your heart and mine! His name is Love; his word is Power. As sure as the sun will rise to-morrow, so sure is his promise, that he will in no wise cast out them that come unto him. If we have a desire for his blessings, he first gave it us, and therefore will not disappoint us. I long to see and hear you rejoicing in his salvation. He only knows the many prayers I have offered for you; I trust not in vain. I cannot doubt but the one thing needful is your chief desire. Every thing else will shortly fail us; but the blessings of the Gospel will last through life, through death, and to eternity.

Hoxton, August 27.

I LAID me down in peace, and awoke in safety; for the Lord sustained me. He is about our path by day, and our bed by night, and preserves us from innumerable evils, which would come upon us every hour, if his watchful providence did not protect us. He is our sure, though invisible, shield; therefore we are unhurt, though, in ourselves, we are weak and defenceless, like a city without walls or gates, and open to excursions from every quarter. Could we but live more sensible of his goodness, and maintain that feeling of gratitude towards him which we do to some of our fellow-creatures, we should be happy. For what is the great design of the Gospel? Is it not to introduce us into a state of the most honourable and interesting friendship, and to perpetuate to us the pleasure which we find in pleasing those who are dearest to us? The Lord Jesus is our best friend: his character is supremely excellent, our obligations to him are inexpressible, our dependence upon him is absolute, and our happiness, in every sense, is in his hands. May our love, therefore, be fixed upon him, and we shall do well. He will guide us with his eye, guard us by his power, and his fullness and bounty will supply all our wants.

As to dear Eliza, I hope I have made up my mind about her. If her recovery could be purchased, I think I would bid as high for it as my ability would reach, provided it was the Lord's will. But I am so short-sighted, that I dare not ask for the continuance of her life, (nor even of yours,) but with a reserve of submission to his wisdom. I know not what might be the

possible consequences, if I could have my own will. I know he can restore her, and I believe he will, if it be for the best. If not, I desire to submit, or rather, to acquiesce, to be satisfied. I shall feel for myself if she be removed: and probably my feelings will be doubled and accented upon your account. But he can support us, and sanctify the painful dispensation to us both. I pray to be enabled to intrust and resign every thing to him. This is not an easy lesson to flesh and blood; but grace can make it practicable. For the rest, if she should be taken off in a moment, I have reason to be quite easy about the event, as to herself. And if she should decline gradually, I have little doubt but the Lord will enable her to speak to the comfort and satisfaction of all about her. She is in his wise and merciful hands; and there I am content to leave her.

Hoxton, September 1.

It is a maxim with me, when I can hope my intention is right, to make myself as easy as possible about consequences. I did not apprehend that Eliza had finally given up bathing; and Mr. T****'s kind letter confirmed my determination to visit you. I therefore took places early in the Diligence that I might not be daily pestered with an anxious fear of being too late, and thereby disappoint you. I know the way of man is not in himself: I believe the Most High Lord condescends to direct the steps of those who depend upon his guidance; and I am aware that a thousand events, unforeseen and unthought of, may depend upon our movements. On these grounds I prayed him to direct me; and I am satisfied. If we come down to South-

ampton before you leave it, I shall be ready to return with you the next morning, if you think proper. Every thing will easily give way to my attention to dear Eliza.

Though Monday is the day on which I hope to meet our society, this was not the reason why I fixed to set off on Tuesday. I am not fond of travelling on a Monday, when I can avoid it. The thoughts of something relative to the journey might intrude and discompose my mind on the Lord's day, which I love to enjoy as quietly as possible: and, after the services of that day, a good night's rest is desirable. I thought, if I changed my bed on Sunday evening, and rose at four the next morning, I might not come to you so well and composed as I hope I shall on Tuesday. Otherwise, neither that society nor any company in the kingdom should detain me a day from you, unnecessarily, when you expect me, and after a month's absence. I think of our hoped-for meeting on Tuesday next with much the same anticipation of pleasure, as when I have formerly been on the return to you from an African voyage. What difference there is, I compare to the difference between the blossom and the fruit. The blessing of the Lord upon our connexion has, in the course of thirty-five years, ripened the passion of love into a solid and inexpressibly tender friendship; which, I trust, in its most valuable properties, will subsist for ever. I shall never find words fully to tell you how much I owe you, how truly I love you, nor the one half of what my heart means, when I subscribe myself,

Your most affectionate and obliged husband.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

A Relation of some Particulars, respecting the Cause, Progress, and Close of the last Illness of my late dear Wife.

Among my readers, there will, doubtless, be some of a gentle, sympathizing spirit, with whom I am not personally acquainted; and perhaps their feelings may so far interest them in my concerns, as to make them not unwilling to read a brief account of my late great trial. I shall allot a few pages to this purpose, by way of close to my book, and to my history.

My dear wife had naturally a good constitution, and was favoured with good spirits to the last. But the violent shock she sustained in the year 1754, when I was suddenly attacked by a fit (I know not of what kind) which left me no sign of life, for about an hour, but breathing, made as sudden a change in her habit, and subjected her, from that time, to a variety of chronic complaints. She was several times confined, for five or six months, to her chamber, and often brought so low that her recovery was deemed hopeless. I believe she spent ten years out of forty that she was spared to me, (if all the days of her sufferings were added together,) in illness and pain. But she had likewise long intervals

of health. The fit I have mentioned (the only one I ever had) was the mean the Lord was pleased to appoint in answer to my prayers, to free me from the irksome seafaring life in which I was till then engaged, and to appoint me a settlement on shore.

Before our removal from Liverpool, she received a blow upon her left breast, which occasioned her some pain and anxiety for a little time, but which soon wore off. A small lump remained in the part affected, but I heard no more of it for many years. I believe that, latterly, she felt more than I was aware of; but her tenderness for me made her conceal it as long as possible. I have often since wondered at her success; and how I could be kept so long ignorant of it.

In the month of October, 1788, she applied, unknown to me, to a friend of mine, an eminent surgeon. Her design was, if he approved it, to submit to an operation, and so to adjust time and circumstances with him, that it might be performed in my absence, and before I could know it. But the surgeon told her that the malady was too far advanced, and the tumour (the size of which he compared to the half of a melon) was too large to warrant the hope of being extracted, without the most imminent danger of her life, and that he durst not attempt it. He could give her but little advice, more than to keep herself as quiet, and her mind as easy, as possible; and little more encouragement, than by saying, that the pains to which she was exposed were generally rendered tolerable by the use of laudanum: to which, however, she had a dislike, little short of an antipathy.

I cannot easily describe the composure and resignation with which she gave me this recital, the next day, of her interview with the surgeon; nor of the sensa-

tions of my mind while I heard it. My conscience told me that I had well deserved to be wounded where I was most sensible; and that it was my duty to submit with silence to the will of the Lord. But I strongly felt, that unless he was pleased to give me this submission, I was more likely to toss like a wild bull in a net, in defiance of my better judgment.

Soon after, the Lord was pleased to visit our dear adopted daughter with a dreadful fever, which, at first, greatly affected her nerves, and afterwards became putrid. She was brought very near to the grave indeed; for we, once or twice, thought her actually dead. But he, who in the midst of judgment remembers mercy, restored her, and still preserves her, to be the chief temporal comfort of my old age, and to afford me the greatest alleviation of the loss I was soon to experience, that the case could admit.

The attention and anxiety occasioned by this heavy dispensation, which lasted during the whole of a very severe winter, were by no means suited to promote that tranquillity of mind which my good friend wished my dear wife would endeavour to preserve. She was often much fatigued, and often much alarmed. Next to each other, this dear child had the nearest place both in her heart and mine. The effects were soon apparent: as the spring of eighty-nine advanced, her malady rapidly increased; her pains were almost incessant, and often intense, and she could seldom lie one hour in her bed in the same position. Oh! my heart, what didst thou then suffer!

But in April, the God who heareth prayer mercifully afforded relief; and gave such a blessing to the means employed, that her pains ceased. And though, I believe, she never had an hour of perfect ease, she felt

little of the distressing pains incident to her malady from that time to the end of her life, (which was about twenty months,) excepting at three or four short intervals, which, taken together, hardly amounted to two hours: and these returns of anguish, I thought, were permitted to show me how much I was indebted to the goodness of God for exempting her feelings, and my sympathy, from what would have been terrible indeed!

In the close of the summer, she was able to go to Southampton, and returned tolerably well.

She was twice at church, in the first week after she came home. She then went no more abroad, except in a coach, for a little air and exercise; but she was cheerful, tolerably easy, slept as well as most people who are in perfect health, and could receive and converse with her kind friends who visited her.

It was not long after, that she began to have a distaste for food, which continued and increased; so that, perhaps, her death was at last rather owing to weakness from want of nourishment, than to her primary disorder. Her dislike was, first, to butcher's meat, of which she could bear neither the sight nor the smell. Poultry and fish, in their turns, became equally distasteful. She retained some relish for small birds, a while after she had given up the rest; but it was at a season when they were difficult to be obtained. I hope I shall always feel my obligations to the kind friends who spared no pains to procure some for her, when they were not to be had in the markets. At that time I set more value upon a dozen of larks, than upon the finest ox in Smithfield. But her appetite failed to these also, when they became more plentiful.

Under this trying discipline I learnt, more sensibly than ever, to pity those whose sufferings of a similar

kind are aggravated by poverty. Our distress was not small; yet we had every thing within reach that could, in any degree, conduce to her refreshment or relief; and we had faithful and affectionate servants, who were always willingly engaged to their power, yea, as the apostle speaks, beyond their power, in attending and assisting her, by night and by day. What must be the feelings of those who, when afflicted with grievous diseases, pine away, unpitied, unnoticed, without help, and, in a great measure, destitute of common necessaries? This reflection, among others, contributed to quiet my mind, and to convince me that I had still much more cause for thankfulness than for complaint.

For about a twelvemonth of her confinement, her spirits were good, her patience was exemplary, and there was a cheerfulness in her looks and her language that was wonderful. Often the liveliness of her remarks has forced a smile from us, when the tears were in our eyes. Whatever little contrivances she formed for her amusement in the course of the day, she would attend to nothing till she had finished her stated reading of the Scripture; in which she employed much time and great attention. I have her bible by me, (which I would not part with for half the manuscripts in the Vatican,) in which almost every principal text, from the beginning to the end of the book, is marked in the margin with a pencil, by her own dear hand. The good word of God was her medicine and her food, while she was able to read it. She read Dr. Watts' Psalms and Hymns, and the Olney Hymns in the same manner. There are few of them, in which one, two, or more verses, are not thus marked; and in many, which I suppose she read more frequently, every verse is marked.

But in October, the enemy was permitted, for a while,

to take advantage of her bodily weakness, to disturb the peace and serenity of her mind. Her thoughts became clouded and confused: and she gradually lost, not only the comfortable evidence of her own interest in the precious truths of the Bible, but she lost all hold of the truth itself. She doubted the truth of the Bible, or whether truth existed. And, together with this, she expressed an extreme reluctance to death; and could not easily bear the most distant hint of her approaching end, though we were expecting it daily and hourly. This was the *acme*, the high-water mark of my trial; this was hard to bear indeed.

My readers, perhaps, will scarcely believe that I derived some consolation, during this gloomy period, from perceiving that her attachment to me was very sensibly abated. She spoke to me with an indifference of which, a little before, she was incapable. If, when the Lord's presence was withdrawn, and she could derive no comfort from his word, she had found some relief from my being with her, or from hearing me speak, I should have been more grieved. Her affection to me, confirmed by so many proofs in the course of forty years, was not to be impeached by this temporary suspension of its exercise. I judged the same of the frame of her mind, as to her spiritual concerns: I ascribed them both to the same causes, her bodily weakness, and the power of temptation. She was relieved in both respects, after about a fortnight spent in conflict and dismay. The Lord restored peace to her soul; and then her former tenderness to me immediately revived. Then, likewise, she could calmly speak of her approaching dissolution. She mentioned some particulars concerning her funeral, and our domestic concerns, with great composure. But her mind was not so fully restored to its former tone, as

to give her freedom to enlarge upon her hopes and views as I had wished, till near her dissolution; and then she was too low to speak at all.

One addition to our trial yet remained. It had been our custom, when she went from the sofa to her bed, to exert herself for my encouragement, to show me how well she could walk. But it pleased the Lord that, by some alteration which affected her spine, she was disabled from moving herself; and other circumstances rendered it extremely difficult to move her. It has taken five of us near two hours to remove her from one side of the bed to the other; and, at times, even this was impracticable: so that she has lain more than a week exactly in the same spot, without the possibility of changing her position. All this was necessary on my account. The rod had a voice; and it was the voice of the Lord. I understood the meaning no less plainly than if he had spoken audibly from heaven, and said, "Now contemplate your idol: now see what she is, whom you once presumed to prefer to Me!" Even this bitter cup was sweetened by the patience and resignation which he gave her. When I have said "You suffer greatly;" her answer usually was, "I suffer, indeed, but not greatly." And she often expressed her thankfulness, that, though her body was immoveable, she was still permitted the use of her hands.

One of the last sensible concerns she felt respecting this world was, when my honoured friend, patron, and benefactor, the late John Thornton, Esq. of Clapham, was removed to a better. She revered and regarded him, I believe, more than she did any person upon earth; and she had reason. Few had nearer access to know and admire his character; and perhaps none were under greater, if equal, obligations to him than

we. She knew of his illness, but was always afraid to inquire after the event; nor should I have ventured to inform her, but that the occasion requiring me to leave her for four or five hours, when I hardly expected to find her alive at my return, I was constrained to give her the reason of my absence. She eagerly replied, "Go, by all means; I would not have you stay with me upon any consideration." I put the funeral ring I was favoured with into her hands; she put it first to her lips, and then to her eyes, bedewing it with her tears. I trust they soon met again. But she survived him more than a month.

Her head became so affected, that I could do little more than sit and look at her. Our intercourse by words was nearly broken off. She could not easily bear the sound of the gentlest foot upon the carpet, nor of the softest voice. On Sunday the twelfth of December, when I was preparing for church in the morning she sent for me, and we took a final farewell as to this world. She faintly uttered an endearing compellation, which was familiar to her, and gave me her hand, which I held while I prayed by her bed-side. We exchanged a few tears; but I was almost as unable to speak as she was. But I returned soon after, and said, "If your mind, as I trust, is in a state of peace, it will be a comfort to me if you can signify it by holding up your hand." She held it up, and waved it to and fro several times.

That evening her speech, her sight, and, I believe, her hearing, wholly failed. She continued perfectly composed, without taking notice of any thing, or discovering any sign of pain or uneasiness till Wednesday evening, towards seven o'clock. She then began to breathe very hard: her breathing might be called groan-

ing, for it was heard in every part of the house; but I believe it was entirely owing to the difficulty of expiration, for she lay quite still, with a placid countenance, as if in a gentle slumber. There was no start or struggle, nor a feature ruffled. I took my post by her bedside, and watched her nearly three hours, with a candle in my hand, till I saw her breathe her last, on the 15th of December, 1790, a little before ten in the evening.

When I was sure she was gone, I took off her ring, according to her repeated injunction, and put it upon my own finger. I then kneeled down, with the servants who were in the room, and returned the Lord my unfeigned thanks for her deliverance and her peaceful dismission.

How wonderful must be the moment after death! What a transition did she then experience! She was instantly freed from sin, and all its attendant sorrows, and, I trust, instantly admitted to join the heavenly choir. That moment was remarkable to me likewise. It removed from me the chief object which made another day or hour of life, as to my own personal concern, desirable. At the same time it set me free from a weight of painful feelings and anxieties, under which nothing short of a divine power could have so long supported me.

I believe it was about two or three months before her death, when I was walking up and down the room, offering disjointed prayers from a heart torn with distress, that a thought suddenly truck me, with unusual force, to this effect:—"The promises of God must be true; surely the Lord will help me, *if I am willing to be helped!*" It occurred to me, that we are often led, from a vain complacence in what we call our sen-

sibility, to indulge that unprofitable grief which both our duty and our peace require us to resist to the utmost of our power. I instantly said aloud, "Lord, I am helpless indeed, in myself, but I hope I am willing, without reserve, that thou shouldest help me."

It had been much upon my mind, from the beginning of this trial, that I was a minister, and that the eyes of many were upon me; that my turn of preaching had very much led me to endeavour to comfort the afflicted, by representing the Gospel as a catholicon, affording an effectual remedy for every evil, a full compensation for every want or loss to those who truly receive it; so that though a believer may be afflicted, he cannot be properly unhappy, unless he gives way to self-will and unbelief. I had often told my hearers that a state of trial, if rightly improved, was to the Christian a post of honour, affording the fairest opportunity of exemplifying the power of divine grace, to the praise and glory of the Giver. It had been, therefore, my frequent daily prayer, that I might not, by impatience or despondence, be deprived of the advantage my situation afforded me, of confirming, by my own practice, the doctrine which I had preached to others, and that I might not give them occasion to apply to me the words of Eliphaz to Job, ch. iv. 4, 5. "Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees; but now it is come unto thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled!" And I had not prayed in vain. But from the time that I so remarkably felt myself *willing to be helped*, I might truly say, to the praise of the Lord, "My heart trusted in Him, and I was helped" indeed. Through the whole of my painful trial, I attended all my stated and occasional service

as usual; and a stranger would scarcely have discovered, either by my words or looks, that I was in trouble. Many of our intimate friends were apprehensive that this long affliction, and especially the closing event, would have overwhelmed me; but it was far otherwise. It did not prevent me from preaching a single sermon, and I preached on the day of her death.

After she was gone, my willingness to be helped, and my desire that the Lord's goodness to me might be observed by others, for their encouragement, made me indifferent to some laws of established custom, the breach of which is often more noticed than the violation of God's commands. I was afraid of sitting at home, and indulging myself by poring over my loss; and therefore I was seen in the street, and visited some of my serious friends the very next day. I likewise preached three times while she lay dead in the house. Some of my brethren kindly offered their assistance; but, as the Lord was pleased to give me strength, both of body and mind, I thought it my duty to stand up in my place as formerly. And after she was deposited in the vault, I preached her funeral sermon,* with little more sensible emotion than if it had been for another person. I have reason to hope that many of my hearers were comforted, and animated under their afflictions, by what they saw of the Lord's goodness to me in my time of need. And I acknowledge that it was well worth standing a while in the fire, for such an opportunity of experiencing and exhibiting the power and faithfulness of his promises.

I was not supported by lively sensible consolations, but by being enabled to realize to my mind some great

* From a text which I had reserved, from my first entrance on the ministry, for this particular service, if I should survive her, and be able to speak.

and leading truths of the word of God. I saw, what indeed I knew before, but never till then so strongly and clearly perceived, that, as a sinner, I had no right, and, as a believer, I could have no reason, to complain. I considered her as a loan, which He who lent her to me had a right to resume whenever he pleased; and that as I had deserved to forfeit her every day from the first, it became me rather to be thankful that she was spared to me so long, than to resign her with reluctance when called for. Further, that his sovereignty was connected with infinite wisdom and goodness; and that consequently, if it were possible for me to alter any part of his plan, I could only spoil it—that such a short-sighted creature as I, so blind to the possible consequences of my own wishes, was not only unworthy, but unable to choose well for myself; and that it was therefore my great mercy and privilege that the Lord condescended to choose for me. May such considerations powerfully affect the hearts of my readers under their troubles, and then I shall not regret having submitted to the view of the public, a detail which may seem more proper for the subject of a private letter to a friend. They who can feel for me, will, I hope, excuse me. And it is chiefly for their sakes that I have written it.

When my wife died the world seemed to die with her, (I hope to revive no more.) I see little now, but my ministry and my Christian profession, to make a continuance in life, for a single day, desirable; though I am willing to wait my appointed time. If the world cannot restore her to me, (not that I have the remotest wish that her return was possible,) it can do nothing for me. The Bank of England is too poor to compensate for such a loss as mine. But the Lord, the all-suffi-

cient God speaks, and it is done. Let those who know him, and trust him, be of good courage. He can give them strength according to their day; he can increase their strength as their trials are increased, to any assignable degree. And what he can do, he has promised he will do. The power and faithfulness on which the successive changes of day and night, and of the seasons of the year, depend, and which uphold the stars in their orbits, is equally engaged to support his people, and to lead them safely and unhurt (if their path be so appointed,) through floods and flames. Though I believe she has never yet been (and probably never will be) out of my waking thoughts for five minutes at a time; though I sleep in the bed in which she suffered and languished so long; I have not had one uncomfortable day, nor one restless night, since she left me. I have lost a right hand, which I cannot but miss continually, but the Lord enables me to go on cheerfully without it.

May his blessing rest upon the reader! May glory, honour, and praise be ascribed to his great and holy name, now and for ever! Amen.

No. II.

VERSES SUNG AFTER HER FUNERAL SERMON.

HABAK. iii. 17, 18.

Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

1 THE earth, with rich abundance stor'd
To answer all our wants,
Invites our hearts to praise the Lord,
For what his bounty grants.

2 Flocks, herds, and corn, and grateful fruit,
His gracious hand supplies;
And while our various tastes they suit,
Their prospect cheers our eyes.

3 To these he adds each tender tie
Of sweet domestic life;
Endearing joys, the names imply,
Of parent, husband, wife!

4 But sin has poisoned all below,
Our blessings burdens prove;
On ev'ry hand we suffer wo,
But most where most we love.

5 Nor vintage, harvest, flocks, nor herds,
Can fill the heart's desire;
And oft a worm destroys our gourds,
And all our hopes expire.

6 Domestic joys, alas! how rare!
Possess'd and known by few!
And they who know them, find they are
As frail and transient too.

7 But you, who love the Saviour's voice,
And rest upon his name,
Amidst these changes may rejoice,
For he is still the same.

8 The Lord himself will soon appear,
Whom you, unseen, adore;
Then he will wipe off ev'ry tear,
And you shall weep no more.

No. III.

EBENEZER:

A MEMORIAL OF THE UNCHANGEABLE GOODNESS OF GOD UNDER CHANGING DISPENSATIONS.

No. 1.

Written on Feb. 12, 1775.—The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of our Marriage.

THE LORD GAVE—

1 For what this day recalls to mind
My praise to God is due;
How many blessings he design'd
To give, in giving you.

2 When hateful, hating, and forlorn,
In Afric's wilds I stray'd;
His hand secur'd my safe return,
But *you* the *mean* was made.

3 How little, then, could be foreseen
My path in future life!
But he prepar'd each following scene,
By making you my wife.

4 The happy day that join'd our hands,
(Sweet prelude to his grace,)
More firm in my remembrance stands
Than if engrav'd in brass.

5 But, ah! my heart, by sin betray'd,
(How painful is the thought,)
Soon of the gift an idol made,
The Giver soon forgot.

6 How justly might some sudden turn
Have parted us again;
And left my guilty soul to mourn
In agony and pain!

7 But though we both, and chiefly I,
For good have render'd ill,
His mercy hath been always nigh,
His hand preserves us still.

8 With mutual love, and peace, and health,
And friends, we have been blest;
And if not what the world calls *wealth*,
We have *enough* possess'd.

9 From place to place, from year to year,
The Lord has been our guide;
Our sure resource in time of fear,
When all has fail'd beside.

10 Thus five-and-twenty years the sun
Has trod his annual path;
And we apace are posting on
To meet the stroke of death!

11 Sure, none a happier life have known,
Than ours, thus far, has been;
But could we covet, now 'tis gone,
To live it o'er again?

12 Like checker'd cloth, the warp with love
And comfort has been spread;
But cares and crosses, interwove,
Have furnish'd half the thread.

13 Yes! even we, who so much joy,
So much endearment, know,
Have found that something will annoy
And tarnish all below!

14 Yet ev'ry cross a mercy is,
A blessing every thorn,
That tells us, here is not our bliss,
We were for nobler born.

15 That I am hers, and she is mine,
Invites my feeble lays;
But, Saviour, that we both are thine,
Demands my highest praise.

16 With thee, dear Lord, who rulest all,
The wise appointment lies,
To which of us the lot must fall,
To close the other's eyes!

17 Then all our intercourse while here,
(How happy, and how kind!)
Will like a fleeting dream appear,
Which leaves no trace behind.

18 Prepare us, ev'ry day we live,
For that important hour;
And when, at length, it shall arrive,
Support us by thy pow'r.

19 Who first departs, may thy kind smile
Strengthen, with joy to go;
And the survivor reconcile
To stay a while below.

20 Then, may it seem of little weight,
Which of us goes before;
Assur'd that we shall shortly meet
To part again no more.

21 Oh, with what wonder, joy, and praise,
Our souls shall then review
The snares and mercies of the ways
We were conducted through.

No. 2.

Written on December 15, 1791.—*The First Anniversary of her Dismission from this State of Sin and Sorrow.*

THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY. BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD.

2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

1 LORD! she was thine, and not my own,
Thou hast not done me wrong;
I thank thee for the precious loan
Afforded me so long.

2 For though no single day has been,
Or talent, well improv'd :
I chiefly see, and mourn, my sin
In what I chiefly lov'd.

3 I trembled, when thou saidst, " Resign
" A much-abused trust ;"
But could not wonder, or repine ;
I own'd the sentence just.

4 Yet mercy sweeten'd my distress ;
And, while I felt the rod,
Gave me abundant cause to bless
An all-sufficient God !

5 Sharp was my pain, and deep my wound,
(A wound which still must bleed,)
But daily help and strength I found,
Proportion'd to my need.

6 Like Jonah, (well our stories suit,)
I view'd my gourd, well pleas'd ;
Like him, I could not see the root
On which the worm had seiz'd.

7 But saw, at length, the hour draw nigh
(That hour I since have known)
When all my earthly joy must die,
And I be left alone.

8 She dropp'd a tear, and grasp'd my hand,
And fain she would have spoke ;
But well my heart could understand
The language of her look.

9 Farewell, it meant a last adieu!
I soon shall cease from pain;
This silent tear I drop for you:
We part—to meet again.

10 I said, "If leaving all below,
"You now have peace divine;
"And would, but cannot, tell me so,
"Give me, at least, a sign."

11 She rais'd, and gently wav'd her hand,
And fill'd me with a joy,
To which the wealth of sea and land
Compar'd, were but a toy.

12 I trust, indeed, she knew thy grace
Before this trying day;
But Satan had, a while, access,
To fill her with dismay.

13 Till then, through two long years she pin'd,
Without an hour of ease;
Cheerful she still appear'd, resign'd,
And bore her cross in peace.

14 Daily, while able, closely too,
She read the word of God;
And thence her hope and comfort drew,
Her med'cine and her food.

15 A stranger might have well presum'd
From what he saw her bear;
This burning bush was not consum'd,
Because the Lord was there.

16 Three days, she could no notice take,
Nor speak, nor hear, nor see;
O Lord, did not my heart-strings ache?
Did not I cry to thee,

17 That while I watch'd her, night and day,
My will to thine might bow?
And, by this rod, didst thou not say,
"Behold your idol now!

18 "From her you lov'd too much, proceed
"Your sharpest grief and pains;
"For, soon or late, the heart must bleed
"That idols entertains."

19 Yes, Lord, we both have guilty been,
And justly are distress'd;
But since thou dost forgive our sin,
I welcome all the rest.

20 Only uphold us in the fire,
Our fainting spirits cheer;
And I thy mercy will admire
When most thou seem'st severe.

21 Fainter, her breath, and fainter grew,
Until she breath'd her last:
The soul was gone before we knew
The stroke of death was past.

22 Soft was the moment, and serene,
That all her suff'rings clos'd;
No agony or struggle seen,
No feature discompos'd:

23 The parting struggle all was mine;
" 'Tis the survivor dies:"
For she was freed, and gone to join
The triumph of the skies.

24 To me it was a stormy day,
Though glad for her release;
But he whom seas and storms obey,
Soon bid the tempest cease.

25 My selfish heart had wish'd her here,
To spend her days in pain;
That she what I could say might hear,
And speak to me again.

26 Our kindness to our suff'ring friends
Would keep them still below;
But He who loves them better, sends,
And at his call they go.

27 Each moment, since that trying hour,
My loss I keenly feel;
But trust I feel my Saviour's pow'r
To sanctify and heal.

28 Ah, world, vain world! by whom my Lord
Was crucify'd and slain,
What comfort now canst thou afford
To mitigate my pain?

29 Long since, I should, by his dear cross,
Have learnt to die to thee;
But if I learn it by my loss,
That loss my gain will be.

30 Now, Lord, to thee I would apply,
On thee alone depend;
Thou art, when creatures fail and die,
An ever-living friend!

31 Now thou hast made a void within,
Which only thou canst fill;
Oh! grant me pardon of my sin,
And grace to do thy will.

32 That I with joy thy flock may feed,
A pattern to them be,
And comfort them in time of need,
Vouchsafe to comfort me.

33 Let me believe, and love, and praise,
And wonder, and adore,
And view thee guiding all my ways;
I ask for nothing more.

34 To thee I would commit the rest:
The when, the how, the where,
Thy wisdom will determine best,
Without my anxious care.

35 May I with faith and patience wait,
For soon thy call will come;
When I shall change this mortal state
For an eternal home.

36 The vails of sin and unbelief
Shall then be rent in twain;
And they who parted here with grief,
Shall meet, with joy, again.

37 Then will the Lord himself appear
With all his blood-bought sheep,
To wipe from ev'ry face the tear,
And they no more shall weep.

38 May thoughts like these relieve my toil,
And cheer my spirit up!
Who would not suffer here a while,
For such a glorious hope?

No. IV.

SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE 15TH DECEMBER, 1792.

1 While grace her balm, to soothe my pain
And heal my wound, applies;
To make it throb and bleed again,
Officious mem'ry tries.
Too well she knows each tender string
That twines about my heart;
And how to fix a piercing sting
In the most feeling part!

2 May I not yet some respite take
From dwelling on her death?
Did I not feel her heart-strings break,
And watch her last drawn breath?
Oh! cease, at length, to haunt my mind
With images of grief;
Canst thou no pleasing topics find
To yield me some relief?

3 But as a sieve the bran retains,
And lets the flour fall through,
So careful mem'ry keeps my pains
And loss in constant view;
While comforts, countless as the sands,
Which crown my favour'd lot,
Though each my warmest praise demands,
Are heedlessly forgot.

4 And can I then forget the times,
When helpless, hopeless, lost,
I pin'd, in miseries and crimes,
On Afric's horrid coast?
To Christ, my Lord, a daring foe,
To men a wretched slave;
Yet, on that brink of endless wo,
He show'd his power to save

5 His mercy, though by me unsought,
Kept me from falling in;
His arm my full deliv'rance wrought,
His grace forgave my sin.
He taught my base, blaspheming tongue
To aim at pray'r and praise;
Became my shield, and strength, and song,
And guided all my ways.

6 Thus, freed from misery and death,
My sorrow chang'd to joy;
He sent me forth to preach the faith
I labour'd to destroy.
His mercies, through my future life,
Were new from day to day;
The chief of all, was that dear wife
He since has call'd away.

7 Shall one so favour'd e'er repine?
Or one so vile complain?
No—let me praise—she long was mine,
And shall be mine again.
If death could break our union past,
(Frail, though endear'd the tie,)
The stronger band of grace shall last,
When death itself shall die!

END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

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